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**A COMPENDIOUS HISTORY
OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

English Grammar and Composition

A Practical Manual of General English

Religio Medici (Edited with an Introduction and Notes).

A COMPENDIOUS HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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TO HIM
to whom alone is all dedication due

अंधकार है वहाँ जहाँ आदित्य नहीं है
मुर्दा है वह देश जहाँ साहित्य नहीं है ।
देवी प्रसाद 'पूर्ण'

*Dark is the place where is no Sun,
Dead is the land which is void of Literature.*
— Devi Prasad 'Poorna'

Literature is saying it with flowers.

No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en,
In brief, Sir, study what you most affect.
The Taming of the Shrew (1.1)

We are vessels of a very limited content. Not all
men can read all books; it is only in a chosen few
that any man will find his appointed food.
R.L. Stevenson

PREFACE

This second edition of the book is substantially a reprint of the first, except for the addition of two synopses and incorporation of a critique on T.S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Like the previous edition the book presents within a brief compass a complete history of the development of English literature from Anglo-Saxon times to the present day. Though intended mainly for students in the Indian universities, it can be profitably read by university students in all other countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Certain features of the book presently to be described will appeal even to the general reader.

I need not apologise for adding one more history of English literature to the large number already existing, including such excellent ones as those by Saintsbury, Legouis and Cazamian, and Sampson. The European authors take no account of the special needs and difficulties of Eastern students. They make large assumptions about their readers' knowledge of British history, society and religion—assumptions which however justified in regard to British and American students, are without foundation in respect of students in India and other Eastern countries.

I have taken nothing for granted and have accordingly introduced the following features which are designed specifically for the benefit of all foreign students of the subject.

(1) A brief but comprehensive summary of political events and social conditions in each literary period.

(2) A brief life-sketch of every important author together with a list of his principal works.

(3) A detailed study of every major author together with liberal extracts from his works.

(4) Summaries or outlines of all famous tales in verse, novels, and plays.

(5) Brief notices of modern American and Commonwealth novelists. English literature in the 20th century has become more or less cosmopolitan, and though American literature and English literature of the Commonwealth countries are outside the scope of this book, exception has been made in respect of the novel because of its widespread popularity.

(6) A Glossary of technical terms of literature.

The whole art of teaching and exposition, in my opinion, consists in making things concrete. A sprinkling of adjectives like delightful,

charming, rhetorical, sparkling, etc. or of the more fashionable and almost obligatory jargon of contemporary criticism, such as, evocative, imagery, perceptive, perspicuous, etc. conveys very little to young minds. I have accordingly avoided abstractions as far as possible and made no generalisation about any author of importance without adducing samples. Our first aim should be to lure young people to beautiful pieces of writing, to encourage them to read the classics of literature, to rouse their curiosity about them, to whet their appetite for intellectual and spiritual feasts. To ask them, as is the common practice in our colleges and universities, to analyse the thought and style of a writer before they have stored their minds with literary gems of many kinds, and before they have attained the necessary maturity of understanding by experience, is putting the cart before the horse. First things should come first. And the first thing is to enjoy literature; to analyse such enjoyment, to give reasons for it, is of secondary importance.

Excessive stress on second-hand criticism not only distracts the students' attention from the more worthwhile business of original reading; it kills whatever capacity they may have of thinking for themselves. Instead of reading *Hamlet* a number of times, which would give them a better idea of what it is about, they go about inquiring: Sir, which is the best book on *Hamlet*? The best book on *Hamlet*, they should be told, is *Hamlet*. There is a story that Shakespeare came back to life and sat for a Civil Service Examination. One of the questions in the paper on Shakespeare was: What is the nature of the tragedy in *Hamlet*? Shakespeare could not answer the question because he had not read Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*!

But for the compelling urge to write I would not have undertaken such a stupendous task. When I began work on this book some ten years ago, there were still large gaps in my reading especially of 'modernist' poetry and *avant-garde* novelists and dramatists. I cannot pretend that my experience of this latest writing of our century was uniformly happy. I have had to wade through a lot of rubbish, but that is the price every literary historian has to pay. Fortunately, this trash forms such a small part of the whole as to be negligible. It takes all sorts to make our world and it is inconceivable that the literary world should be without some eccentrics and perverts. The current crusade against pronography that is sweeping England shows that there is a general revulsion of feeling against perversion of art and one hopes that the crisis will soon be over and sanity restored.

To compress the literature of fifteen hundred years within the limits of a single, handy volume is not easy. Long and arduous as the work has been, however, it has not been without its rewards in pleasurable excitement. Saintsbury in admonishing Matthew Arnold for his contempt of the historic estimate of poetry says that the writing of literary history is a "laborious" and "ungrateful" task. Laborious, yes; but why "ungrateful"? "A man," says Marcus Aurelius, "who has done a good deed should be like a horse that has

run its race, a dog that has tracked its game, or a bee that has gathered its honey." In other words, a duty well performed is a thing complete in itself, needing no reward of gratitude. The satisfaction derived from such work is its own reward. It is in this consciousness of having done something to share my experience with others that I am offering this book to students and teachers of English literature.

On matters of biographical and bibliographical details I have depended on the work of specialists and researchers, but in critical judgments my 'borrowings' from scholars and critics better qualified than myself are limited to the extent of my agreement with them. Even where I have adopted or adapted their valuations, I have never settled for being a carbon copy. To originality in its basic sense—that of originating or creating—I lay no claim. My claim is more modest: it is that I have never ventured a critical statement on any subject until I had gained a clear insight into it and grasped it to my satisfaction. Where I haven't understood something—I am not a know-all—I have said so. Besides, I am not daunted by big names and have not hesitated in advancing an opinion at variance with that of a reputed authority or with general consensus. In the republic of letters, as in the republic of politics, every adult has an unfettered vote. Apart from this, one's intellectual integrity is more precious than tame conformity.

This, of course, involves a risk. The dissenting critic is held to be either insensitive to certain kinds of appeal or narrow in his tastes. This, however, is a risk every honest critic must be prepared for. For my part, I can only adopt Touchstone's plea when he took up the plain Audrey: "A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favour'd thing, sir, but mine own."

The book represents life-long reading and nearly four decades of teaching English literature to B.A. and M.A. classes; and though I cannot claim to have read every scrap of it—I am no Saintsbury—the amount of reading and thinking that has gone into its making gives me the confident hope that it will meet a very real need. Its special features make it a combined history of English literature and mini reference book on the subject.

My approach to English literature is that of one who, though steeped in the English spirit, remains basically Indian. As such the book cannot be without appeal to British students who would be interested to know how the classics of their language are viewed by an admiring foreigner. The British Empire is no more, but the empire of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Dickens endures, and will endure during the countless ages to come.

To name all the help-books I have consulted or merely dipped into is neither necessary nor possible. Those, however, on which I have leaned rather heavily and to which my debt is hereby gratefully acknowledged are: Saintsbury's *Short History of English Literature*, *A History of English Literature* by Legouis and Cazamian (the portion by Legouis), Sampson's *Concise Cambridge History of English Lite-*

ature, *Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (3 Vols), Harvey's *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, and that everhandy standby of universal reference, *Pears Cyclopaedia* (1968-69).

My indebtedness to the British Council Library at Bhopal would be inadequately expressed in mere thanks. But for the facilities provided by this library it would have been impossible for me to fill the gaps in my reading of the latest writings. I heartily thank the Librarian and his staff for their prompt and courteous attention to my needs.

My more personal thanks are due, and are hereby paid, to Mr. R.P. Noronha, I C.S., for his "home work" in correcting me on the Oxford Movement and its relation to the history of the Anglican Church.

Lastly, I offer my hearty thanks to Messrs Kitab Ghar, Publishers, Gwalior, for their generous permission to incorporate in this book some two pages of matter from the Introduction to my edition of Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*.

R.D. Trivedi.

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BOOK ONE

THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH NATION

*These are the Heroes who despise the Dutch,
And rail at new-come Foreigners so much;
Forgetting that themselves are deriv'd
From the most Scoundrel Race that ever liv'd,
A horrid Crowd of Rambling Thieves and Drones,
Who ransack'd Kingdoms, and dispeopled Towns;
The Pict and Painted Britain, Treach'rous Scot
By Hunger, Theft, and Rapine, hither brought;
Norwegian Pirates, Buccaneering Danes,
Whose Red-hair'd Offspring ev'ry where remains;
Who join'd with Norman-French compound the Breed
From whence your True-Born Englishmen proceed.
(—Daniel Defoe: The True-Born Englishman, 1701)*

The English a composite race—Celts and Teutons—Celts of France—Celts of Ireland and Scotland (Gael)—Celts of England (Britons) Britain conquered by Rome—Roman withdrawal from Britain and its conquest by Anglo-Saxons (Teutons)—Their conversion to Christianity and Civilisation—Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms—Alfred the Great—Invasion by Scandinavians and their ultimate absorption by Anglo-Saxons—Edward the Confessor and Harold—The Norman Conquest—The making of English language—The English character.

In order to understand the history of English literature it is essential to know something about the people who have produced that literature. The English are a composite race, because various racial elements have entered into their making: Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Danes, Normans. The Celtic people were different from the other three peoples who were essentially of the same kindred of Teutonic stock. As the Celts were practically displaced by the Teutons, the Englishman of today is essentially Teutonic in character tempered by Celtic. The Celtic strain is stronger in Scotland,

and is dominant in Wales, for the Welsh are the only true descendants of ancient Celts.

Now let us consider briefly each of these four peoples whose mixing together has produced the English nation.

The Celts (pronounced Selts, also Kelts) were a branch of Indo-Europeans that had settled in Western Europe including Italy, France and Spain, as early as the sixth or seventh century B.C. The Celts of Gaul (France) called *Galli* were conquered by Julius Caesar and were absorbed by the Romans. These Romanised *Galli* were conquered and absorbed by the Franks, a group of barbaric Germanic tribes, towards the end of the fifth century A.D. after the fall of the western half of the Roman Empire. Clovis, the first King of United Franks, adopted Christianity along with his subjects. He is generally regarded as the founder of the French nation. The important point to remember is that France is thus both German and Roman, the Roman predominating.

The Celts of Ireland, the Gaels, were perhaps the first occupants of a large part of England, but were later driven west into Ireland and north into Scotland by another group of Celts, the *Brythons* or *Britons*, probably a spill over from France. The Gaels lived relatively undisturbed in Ireland until the invasion of Scandinavian Vikings or Norsemen in the ninth and tenth centuries. The Scandinavians were defeated by the Irish in 1014 and were absorbed by the Gaels.

The Irish were converted to Christianity about the middle of the fifth century by St. Patrick, a Christian Briton taken prisoner by the Irish raiders after the Roman withdrawal from Britain early in the fifth century. He became the patron saint of Ireland. His missionaries carried the torch of Irish Christianity to England. The earliest Irish poetry dates from the time of St. Patrick. Literary activity came to an end after the conquest of Ireland by Henry II in 1182. Since then there has been little of interest in Irish literature until the Celtic Revival in the beginning of this century in the work of poets and playwrights like W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge. Ireland remained under English rule until she became in 1937 an independent State under the name 'Eire'.

The Celts of England, *Brythons* or *Britons*, after driving out the Gaels occupied the southern half of the island. Their history begins with the Roman invasions under Julius Caesar. When Caesar was subduing Gaul, the Britons of England sent aid to the *Galli*, their cousins of Gaul. Caesar thereupon invaded England (B.C. 55) just to punish the allies of the conquered Gaul, but did not penetrate deep into the country. His expedition was exploratory and was followed by another next year (B.C. 54). This also was not a success and it was not until the reign of Claudius a century later that Britain was finally conquered by the Romans (43 A.D.). The Romans conquered Britain, but did not push north into Scotland.

In order to defend their northern frontiers against the Picts (Painted men) and Scots, they built a wall, called Hadrian's Wall (after the emperor Hadrian) which ran from coast to coast. Parts of this wall still exist. Under the Roman rule Britain was converted to Christianity and otherwise Romanized. The Romans built roads, Villas and baths and made London an important trading centre. But when in the fifth century the German barbarians threatened the frontiers of the Roman Empire, the Roman legions in occupation of Britain were withdrawn for service at home, and the island was left defenceless. When the Romans withdrew, they left nothing behind except a few roads and names of towns. It is a curious fact of history that while France and Spain became Roman in language and culture, four centuries of Roman rule did not leave any permanent mark of Latin civilisation on Britain. The Latin language, Roman art and culture disappeared without a trace. The later Latin influence in English language and literature came through the Normans.

The Roman occupation, the long peace and the benefits of civilised life had made the Britons too soft and unwarlike to resist the fierce invaders that began to pour into Britain after the withdrawal of the Roman armies (410 A.D.). The first invasion took place in the middle of the fifth century to be followed by others till the end of the sixth century. Most of the Britons were exterminated, others retreated to Cornwall, Wales and Strathclyde (the north-west coast of Scotland between the Ribble and the Clyde), and some migrated to Armorica, later called Brittany (Fr. Bretagne), the north-west peninsula of France. In lower Brittany, a language similar to Welsh is still spoken. Ironically the Britons, the original inhabitants were called 'Welsh' or 'foreigners' by their conquerors.

The Britons of Wales have a distinctive language and culture which have had little influence on English literature beyond furnishing the tales of Arthur, traditionally believed to have been the last king of Britain before the coming of the Anglo-Saxons.

The pre-Christian Celts were a barbarous people with a primitive pagan religion dominated by priests, the Druids. In spite of their barbarity, however, the Celts were romantic, mystery loving, and humorous. They were certainly less grim and gloomy than the Anglo-Saxons. Being a visionary and impractical people they did not achieve any important political status in Europe.

The invaders—Angles, Saxons and Jutes—came from their home-land along the northern shores of Germany. They were Low German tribes allied in race and language. They were barbarians who worshipped heathen gods. Some of the days of the week are named after them Wednesday (after Woden), Thursday (after Thor), Tuesday (after Tiw) and Friday (after the goddess Friga). They were merciless in war, hated towns and lived in wooden huts. The Jutes who came first under their leaders Hengist and Horsa in 450 A.D. settled in Kent to be followed by Saxons south and west. The Angles settled along the eastern coast and being the most

numerous gave their name to the whole country—Angle-land or England. The conquest was completed by the end of the sixth century. Many petty Kingdoms were set up, all fighting with one another. The Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms that assumed importance in the seventh and eighth centuries were: Northumbria in the north, Mercia in the centre; Wessex in the south and Anglia in the east. The names of Saxon Kingdoms remain to this day in Essex (East Saxons), Wessex (West Saxons), Middlesex (Middle Saxons) and Sussex (South Saxons). In Norfolk (North folk) and Suffolk (South folk) we have place names of the Angles of the east coast.

Their language was a Low German dialect *i.e.*, a branch of the West Germanic language. It was a highly inflected language like modern German, Sanskrit or Latin with complicated case endings and elaborate gender. The case-endings have in course of time disappeared, their place being taken by prepositions. The grammatical gender of Anglo-Saxon has been replaced in modern English by the much simpler gender based on sex: masculine, feminine and neuter.

The first step that put the Anglo-Saxons on the path of civilisation was their conversion to Christianity. Their Celtic neighbours of Wales hated them too much to Christianise them. They were converted to Christianity by Roman and Irish missionaries in the seventh century. A band of missionaries under St. Augustine arrived in Kent in 597. They were well received by the ruler who allowed them to build their first Cathedral in Canterbury. The King embraced Christianity and permitted the missionaries to preach freely. Christianity came to the north of England a generation later through the Irish missions of St. Patrick and St. Columba. The missionaries spread not only Christianity among the people, they also introduced the Roman alphabet which replaced the 'runes' or symbolic cuts and scratches on wood or stone—the only writing known to Anglo-Saxons. This was a very important step for the development of English literature. With this new facility at hand, the 'runes' were turned to letters, giving us the old (continental) Anglo-Saxon stories like *Beowulf* for the first time in civilised form. It also opened the way for the production of English literature on English soil—in the writings of Caedmon and Cynewulf. Canterbury in the south, York and Jarrow in the north became great centres of Christian and secular learning in the seventh and eighth centuries. The three great scholars who achieved European fame were: Theodore of Tarsus (a Greek of Tarsus in Asia Minor) archbishop of Canterbury, Bede, the Venerable Bede of Jarrow, and Alcuin of York who was invited by Charlemagne to educate the people of his empire. This glorious period of English learning, however, did not last long, for England was invaded in the last years of the eighth century by Norsemen or Scandinavians from Norway, Sweden and Denmark. They were all called Danes by the English. They were pirates and plunderers and were hardier and fiercer than the Anglo-Saxons, who because of their disunity were

no match for them. They carried fire and sword everywhere destroying churches, monasteries, schools and libraries. Soon the whole of England was overrun except the south where Alfred the Great, King of Wessex made a stout resistance. The Danes were defeated in 878 and made peace promising to become Christians and leaving the south and west to Alfred. They retained the north and east of England, which was called the Danelaw.

The successors of Alfred not only reconquered the Danelaw but extended their rule over the whole of England and parts of Scotland. The Danes settled down under Saxon rule and the two races became almost one by intermarriage. Then in 973 there came to the throne of England Ethelred, the Unready, a weak, selfish and foolish King who undid all the good work of Alfred. A fresh tide of Danish invasion swept England, and Ethelred instead of fighting the invaders began buying them off with a tribute in the form of a tax called the Danegeld levied upon his subjects. This only served to attract more and more Danes claiming Danegeld. Thus menaced, the foolish King resorted to treachery. One night in peace time the English instigated by the King, fell upon the sleeping Danes and killed as many as they could lay their hands upon. Instead of reaping the whirlwind provoked by this deed, Ethelred fled to Normandy. His son, Edmund 'Ironside' fought the Danes bravely, but was betrayed by a traitor and killed. There being no one to succeed him, the Saxons were compelled in sheer despair to accept Canute, King of Norway and Denmark, as their King (1016).

Canute (1016-1035) was a good and wise King and played an important part in uniting the Saxons and Danes into one nation. He employed Danes and Saxons alike and so certain was he of the loyalty of his subjects that he sent away his armies to Denmark. The Saxons and Danes lived side by side and soon forgot their old enmity. As they were essentially of the same stock and spoke different forms of the same language, the two languages in course of time became practically one. Canute's wisdom is illustrated by the well-known story related by Hollinshed of how he rebuked his courtiers for their flattery by showing that he could not command even the tide, a small portion of water, though they said he was king and all powerful.

Canute's sons did not live long, so in 1042 the English throne was restored to a Saxon King, Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). He was the second son of Ethelred and had been brought up in Normandy. He was more French than English and appointed his Norman friends to high offices. He was called 'Confessor' because of his pious and saintly character. He was, however, a weak King and was instrumental in bringing England under the rule of the Normans.

As Edward had no son, the English national assembly, the Witan, anxious for a strong ruler, chose Harold, son of the Saxon

earl Godwin as their King. But Harold was not of royal blood, so William, Duke of Normandy, and the King of Norway, each laid claim to the English throne. The King of Norway in collusion with Harold's brother Tostig landed in Northumbria. Harold defeated the Norwegian forces, but while he was in the north, William landed his forces in the south. Harold hurried south, but his armies were tired with the long march and he was deserted by the northern earls. The famous battle of Hastings was fought on October 14, 1066, and though the English fought heroically, their infantry was no match for the Norman Cavalry and they were defeated. Harold was mortally wounded and the victor William became King of England.

The Norman conquest had far reaching consequences for the future of England. In order to understand these it is necessary to know a little of the origin and early history of the Normans.

The Norsemen (Northmen) also known as Vikings were Germanic peoples of Scandinavia and Denmark. They were a prolific people and were forced by the pressure of population to seek their fortunes abroad. During the ninth and tenth centuries, they terrorised the whole of Europe. We have seen how they began invading England towards the end of the eighth century and ultimately settled there. The Norsemen of Sweden founded a dynasty in northern Russia. The Swedes were called Rhos or rowers and the conquered land came to be known as Russia or the country of rowers. Early in the tenth century, the French King, Charles the Simple, was compelled to make peace with these fierce barbarian marauders who had been raiding France for years. He allowed them to settle in the north of France as his vassals. This territory came to be known as Normandy and its settlers as Normans. In the eleventh century, the Normans conquered England (1066) and set up Norman Kingdoms in southern Italy and Sicily. They became Christians, adopted French manners and customs and attained a high degree of civilisation. Despite all this, however, they remained for long a cruel and violent people. The Norman warriors clad in full armour fought on horseback with lances unlike the English who fought on foot and with heavy battle-axes. They had an instinct for political unity and organisation, a flair for architecture and love of luxury.

The first effect of the Norman rule in England was the political consolidation of the country. As a result, England became a feudal state like other European states in the middle ages. The feudal system was a system of land tenure based on military service. It is usually described as a pyramid with King at the apex and nobles, knights, squires and peasants or serfs in descending order forming the body and base. All land belonged to the King and was held at his pleasure by the barons in return for military service. Knights held land from the barons and squires from the Knights each owing military service to his superior. At the bottom was the peasant or serf, bound to the soil and to his lord. Under this

system the conquered Saxons were reduced to serfdom or slavery doomed to abject poverty and degradation. All high posts in Church and Government were held by Normans who treated the Saxons with contempt. French was the language of the court and of the upper classes, Latin the language of the learned, mostly the clergy who occupied the highest positions not only in the Church but also in the Government. The English language remained only a spoken language and was used only by the poor. As English ceased to be a written language, no important literature was produced in England for about two hundred years, except in Latin and French. But the surprising fact is that English, though suppressed so long, ultimately triumphed over French. When it finally emerged as the language of the united Norman - Saxon nation in the thirteenth century, it was a richer and more flexible language. It had absorbed much of the French vocabulary, and many of the words connected with government rank and honour, chivalry, military affairs, religion, architecture, cooking and dressing so familiar to us in English are French in origin and were borrowed in the years after the conquest. The Normans enriched not only the English language but also English literature by opening up new fields of romantic French literature. English scholars began translating Latin religious literature into English and by and by produced original religious writings of their own, which culminated in Langland's *Piers Plowman* (1362) and Wycliff's Bible (1388). The romances of chivalry that had gathered round Charlemagne and the Knights were translated into English and were made popular by wandering minstrels. This popular enthusiasm for French romances of chivalry soon led to the Englishman's producing original literature of his own. The stage was set for the appearance of Chaucer with his *Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer, the first great English poet sums up the achievements of medieval England in the field of literature. But the greatest achievement was the fusion of the Anglo-Saxons and the Norman French into the unity of the Anglo-Norman nation. Chaucer is, therefore, rightly regarded as the first national poet. The national consciousness had been developed by a number of historical events of the preceding three centuries. King John's misrule provoked wide discontent and brought together under one banner all ranks of the people, barons, clergy, knights and citizens. Their joint demand compelled John to sign the Magna Carta (1215), the greatest charter of English liberties. John also lost Normandy and his other French territories. Until John's time the Kings and barons had occupied themselves with French and European politics. During the years from the loss of Normandy to the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) begun by Edward III to regain his French possessions, the English Kings turned more and more to English affairs like the conquest of Wales and Scotland, and became English Kings in reality. Wales was conquered and Scotland though unconquered, was anglicised. The institution of Parliament in the reign of Edward I also helped to foster the sense of a united nation by bringing to-

gether all classes of people for a common national purpose. The Hundred Years War which resulted in the loss to England of all her French possessions except Calais, had yet one compensating advantage. The English and the Normans were both equally proud of the glorious victories over the French won at Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt. It was soon apparent that it was a racial war and the Normans and the English alike hated the common enemy, the French, and regarded French as an enemy language. This feeling put an end to the snobbery of the Normans who now began to think of themselves not as a separate race but as one people with the English.

The character of a people is determined by many factors, the chief of which are history and geography. While some characteristics of Englishmen may be traced to their ancestry and the events of history, others can be explained only by the geography of England. Living in an island, the English are a sea-faring people, bold, roving and adventurous. The tang of the sea is never absent from their literature. They are spread all over the world and their empire while it lasted was the greatest the world has known. Their island position has made them insular and exclusive and while their climate—misty, rainy and cold—has made them hardy and tenacious, it has also made them a little too glum and unfriendly to be universally likeable. But under his forbidding exterior, the Englishman hides a heart of gold. His sense of honour, of justice and fair play, and his loyalty have won him respect everywhere. The practical necessities of life in an island have made him eminently practical in outlook. He hates abstractions and generalisations and shows his practical commonsense in conservatism as well as in compromise. His habit of understatement is the most eloquent testimony not only to his sense of humour but to his inborn stoicism that hates display of emotion. The English landscape with its undulating plains, hills and valleys, rivers and lakes, green lanes and meadows explains the Englishman's love of the countryside and the beauties of Nature.

But above all, the Englishman loves freedom. This is a recurrent theme in English literature. He is instinctively law-abiding, but quite as instinctively hates laws. "An Englishman's house is his Castle", because he hates restrictions and is impatient of anything that savours of interference with his personal liberty.

In the above assessment we notice certain contradictions in the character of the Englishman. He is friendly at heart, but appears unfriendly. He has a genial sense of humour, but appears quite humourless. He feels deeply, but appears cold and unfeeling. He is law-abiding, but hates laws. It is perhaps on account of these contradictory traits that foreigners say the English are 'mad'. This is, however, a joke. Take him all in all, and the Englishman embodies the rough good nature of his Anglo-Saxon ancestors tempered by the elegance, gaiety and chivalry of the French.

CHAPTER 2

ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

Anglo-Saxon a Low German dialect—Pre-Christian Poetry: *Beowulf*, *Widsith*, *Deor's complaint*, *Seafarer*, *Bruna burgh*, *Battle of Maldon*—Christian Poetry: *Caedmon*, *Cynewulf*—Form and style of A-S Poetry—Anglo-Saxon Prose: Alfred and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*—Continuity of Prose with later developments.

It is customary to begin the history of English literature with an account of Anglo-Saxon or Old English literature. This literature is unintelligible to the present day Englishman and more so to a foreigner. Anglo-Saxon or old English is to all intents and purposes a foreign language, really a Low German dialect, and it has to be learnt like any foreign language with the help of a teacher, dictionary, and grammar. As it is a highly specialised subject, it no longer forms part of English courses even in post-graduate classes except in a few universities in England. English literature properly so called begins with Chaucer in the fourteenth century, but since it has its roots in Anglo-Saxon, a brief survey is necessary for a proper understanding of later developments.

The earliest literature of the Anglo-Saxons must have been oral, passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. It was later carved on wood or stone in the shape of 'runes' or mysterious symbols, for the Anglo-Saxons had no alphabet. We have seen how the Christian missionaries introduced the Roman alphabet in England and how the 'runes' were turned to letters. As the writers were Christian monks, they embellished this literature with Christian sentiments and reflections. So we cannot say that this literature is a direct reflection of the national genius. But even thus modified picture we get is of a semi-barbarous people who cherished certain aristocratic virtues like courage, honour, loyalty, and love of fame. Another interesting feature is that as their pagan literature is modified by Christianity, their Christian literature too is adapted to their pagan traditions.

Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Pre-Christian or Heroic

Anglo-Saxon literature is almost wholly verse. Most of this

verse is religious, only a small portion being secular. Of this secular verse *Beowulf* is the most famous. It is the earliest and greatest epic in Anglo-Saxon. It is a poem of more than 3000 lines celebrating the heroic deeds of the warrior who gives his name to the poem. Beowulf sails from Sweden and comes to the rescue of Hrothgar, king of Denmark, whose feasting hall is nightly raided by a terrible monster, Grendel, who carries off and devours his warriors. Beowulf fights the monster and kills him. But the scourge is not over, for Grendel's mother, even more terrible than Grendel, renews the attacks. Beowulf plunges into the lake at the bottom of which she dwells and kills her with a magic sword. Beowulf and his party then return home laden with honours and gifts from Hrothgar. Fifty years later when Beowulf is old and king of Sweden, he distinguishes himself in another heroic feat. A fire-belching dragon guarding a treasure has been provoked and is ravaging the land. Beowulf, though old, fights and kills him, but is himself mortally wounded in the encounter.

The poem has some notable passages describing the wild northern landscape, the most famous being the description of the marshy lake, the dwelling place of Grendel's mother. The most remarkable quality of the poem, however, is its haunting melancholy. It is cheerless and gloomy in its tone and atmosphere. Its burden is the evanescence and emptiness of life, of fame and glory, and the total effect of the poem is depressing. The chief interest of the poem consists in its portrayal of customs and manners of the heroic past. Historically it takes us back to the first half of the sixth century, and the events described took place in Scandinavia, not in England where the Anglo-Saxons had begun establishing themselves as early as the fifth century. Beowulf himself was a Geat or Goth and cannot be said to be a national hero of the Anglo-Saxons. In fact, the heroes of Anglo-Saxon poetry were not national but common to all Germanic people—Anglo-Saxons, Goths, Burgundians, Lombards, etc. In spite of the primitive civilisation pictured, *Beowulf* is not uncivilised. The Anglo-Saxon ancestors of the English cherished ideals of nobility, generosity, courage, fortitude, and fame. The poem is only partly historical because of the mixture in it of the romantic and the marvellous.

Two other poems of the pre-Christian period which tell us of the primitive past are *Widsith* and *Deor's Complaint*. They are the songs of two wandering minstrels. Widsith, 'the far traveller', has wandered over the Germanic lands and visited many princes. He sings the praises of the princes who have honoured and conferred gifts on him. *Deor's Complaint* is the sad tale of a poet who has been supplanted by a rival in the favour of his lord. He consoles himself by remembering the misfortunes of others before him and ends every stanza with the refrain: That he overwent; this also may I. (so and so overcome his misfortunes; I too may overcome mine).

The English passion for the sea and the adventurous life is

well illustrated by the *Sea farer*, a lyrical poem of great power but marred by obscurity.

War Songs. Of the Anglo-Saxon poems written on English soil, two war songs deserve notice:

Bruna burh and the Battle of Maldon. *Bruna burh* celebrates in spirited verse the victory of Aethelstan, King of Wessex, over the combined forces of the Scots and the Danes in 937. *The Battle of Maldon* in even more spirited verse recounts the defeat of the English at Maldon in 993 at the hands of the Danes. In this poem we have a noble predecessor of later English battle songs like the *Battle of the Baltic* and the *Charge of the Light Brigade*.

Christian Poetry. By far the greater portion of A.-S. poetry is religious. It is associated with two names—Caedmon and Cynewulf. The first is historical, the second more or less mythical. The story of Caedmon as related by Bede is famous. Caedmon was an unlettered cowherd at the monastery of Whitby, to whom the gift of song came by a miracle. Unable to sing at a Saxon feast, he retired to his stall abashed and humiliated. Suddenly an angel appeared and commanded him to sing of the creation. Caedmon thereupon sang of the creation and of the creator and his glory. The most notable of his poems are versions of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. To the mythical or semi-mythical Cynewulf is attributed all the rest of A.-S. poetry, partly original and partly translations or adaptations from Latin or other originals. These are the *Christ*, lives of the Saints *Juliana* and *Elen* (Helena) and *Guthlac* (a native saint), and the *Dream of the Rood*. The last named is the most interesting. In this the rood or the Cross relates its adventures from the time it was cut off from a tree in the forest until it received Jesus who was crucified on it.

Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry is duller than the pre-Christian heroic poetry, its chief defect being its rhetoric with elaborate periphrasis. The resulting verbosity smothers the simple, austere eloquence of the original, whether the Bible or the lives of the saints. For example, "where the Bible says: 'And God said, let there be light, and there was light', the Anglo-Saxon has: "The creator of angels, the Lord of life, bade light appear on the limitless ocean. The order of the most High was accomplished with haste, the holy light spread over the immensity, as the Creator had required" (Legouis).

Form and Style of Anglo-Saxon Poetry

Quite apart from other factors, the quality of any poetry is determined by its language. The Anglo-Saxon language is rough, its words are hard and metallic. The poetry accordingly is crude and rough. But even more serious is the shortcoming of its versification. The stock formula is a line of accented alliterative syllables with a middle pause. Alliteration does lend a musical charm and has always been used with great effect in English poetry.

But the excessive and regular, almost compulsory alliteration, of the Anglo-Saxon verse, makes it not only monotonous but also artificial, for the poet must select the right letter rather than the right word. No advance lay along this line of prosody and Anglo-Saxon poetry came to a dead end even after its sudden and glorious revival in the fourteenth century by Langland and a few others. Further, this monotony of versification is aggravated by the cheerless gloom of tone and temper, dwelling on 'Weird' or fate making short work of man and his achievements. Even the Anglo-Saxon's love of Nature is tinged with melancholy gloom. Instead of treating of the softer aspects of Nature—the spring, sunshine and flowers—Anglo-Saxon poetry dwells on the harsher and wilder aspects of the elements—stormy seas, hail and thunder. To make matters worse, this poetry is marred by verbosity—high sounding words and long-winded periphrasis by way of explanation and elaboration. The Anglo-Saxon poets cannot speak simply.

Anglo-Saxon Prose

Prose in all languages appears later than verse, for the simple reason that men habitually talk prose, and in primitive stages do not think of it as a fit medium for artistic expression. Though the earliest Anglo-Saxon prose dates from the eighth century, the principal documents of any interest belong to the ninth and tenth centuries. These consist of the works of King Alfred (849-899), Aelfric and Wulfstan—both religious writers of the tenth century. The last two are comparatively of little interest as producers of literature, their work being confined to the writing of homilies or sermons. The work of Alfred, however, cannot thus be passed over. He was not only a great king, he was also a great literary figure. He is usually regarded as the founder of English prose. Prompted by the desire to educate his people, he himself translated Latin works into vernacular, besides supervising translations by others. His own translations are: (1) the *History and Geography of Orosius*, a fifth century Latin writer, (2) the *Ecclesiastical History* of Bede, and (3) the *Consolations of Philosophy* of Boethius, a Roman philosopher of late fifth and early sixth century. In addition to these, under his aegis the famous *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* began to be written. It is believed to have been partly written by him, it certainly owed much to his inspiration. It is the most important work of Anglo-Saxon prose, which records the history of England from the time of the Roman occupation to the middle of the twelfth century (1154). Alfred died in 899, but additions to the *Chronicle* continued to be made after his death.

Anglo-Saxon prose is of less literary interest than verse, but it is more or less continuous with the later developments of the language. In other words, Anglo-Saxon prose is more nearly allied than Anglo-Saxon poetry to modern English. This is a point worth remembering, for Anglo-Saxon verse, as we have seen, came to an abrupt end with Langland in the fourteenth century and was heard no more. Later

or modern English poetry beginning with Chaucer underwent a revolutionary change; the poetic rhythm was to depend on the number and kind of *feet* in a line rather than on the number of syllables. Anglo-Saxon prose was subjected to no such revolution in as much as it was either the ordinary speech of the people or formed on Latin, the language of the learned. English language, we have seen, was under a shadow for three hundred years after the Conquest. And when it emerged triumphant in the fourteenth century, old English poetry was a thing of the past, archaic and obsolete, but old English prose had a new lease of life.

BOOK TWO

MIDDLE ENGLISH-PERIOD-1066-1485

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Sovereigns: William the Conqueror or William I 1066-87, William II 1087-1100, Henry I 1100-35, Stephen 1135-54, Henry II 1154-87, Richard I (The Lion-hearted) 1187-99, John 1199-1216, Henry III 1216-72, Edward I 1272-1307, Edward II 1307-27, Edward III 1327-77, Richard II 1377-99, Henry IV 1399-1413, Henry V 1413-22, Henry VI 1422-61, Edward IV 1461-83, Edward V April to June 1483, Richard III 1483-85.

William the Conqueror and his sons William II and Henry I—Stephen and Matilda's Wars—Henry II; Murder of Becket—Richard I and the Crusades—John and the Magna Carta—Henry III and the first Parliament—Edward I and the Conquest of Wales—Edward II and his defeat by Scots at Bannockburn—Edward III and his French victories—Richard II—Black Death, Wat Tyler's Rebellion, deposition—Henry IV—Henry V and his victory at Agincourt—Henry VI—Joan of Arc and the expulsion of the English from France—Wars of the Roses, the King deposed—Edward IV—Edward V the boy King and his younger brother murdered—Richard III—his defeat at Bosworth field—Henry VII and the end of the Wars of the Roses.

William the Conqueror subjugated the whole of England. He made a survey of the whole country so that he might know the extent of his possessions and caused the whole record to be set down in a book with the frightening name of Domesday Book. In spite of all care he took he had to fight all the time, crushing the rebellious English, as well as the rebellious barons. William II, his second son, also called William Rufus (the Red) was like his father, a stern ruler but false, unjust and greedy and was hated by the people. He was followed by Henry I, the third son of the Conqueror. He too was a hard and cruel king who kept his elder brother Robert, Duke of Normandy, in prison all his life. However, he endeared himself to the English by marrying Matilda of Scotland, a princess who was descended from the ancient Kings of Wessex. This marriage served to bring the two races together.

Henry I's son having been drowned, he was succeeded by Stephen, the grandson (daughter's son) of the Conqueror. But Henry's daughter Maud or Matilda disputed the succession and there was a Civil War, resulting in a see-saw, now one side winning, now the other. But as Maud had married a foreigner (Geoffrey of Anjou in France), there was a prejudice against her and she was defeated. In the meanwhile, however, the country was at the mercy of the barons who did what they pleased, perpetrating unspeakable tortures on the people. Stephen's reign was one of the worst in English history.

Henry II, Matilda's son, who succeeded Stephen was a very strong king. The barons had grown very powerful during Stephen's reign but he succeeded in subduing them and restoring order in the country. The Church too was very powerful, but Henry's attempts to bring the Church under his control failed principally because of his headstrong temper. He quarrelled with Thomas a Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and caused him to be murdered. This was a very serious thing and the result was that Becket was regarded as a martyr and the Church continued to enjoy its special privileges for another three hundred years.

Henry II was not only a strong king but a great one—great in the sense that he ruled not only over England, but over Scotland, parts of Ireland, above all, over more than half of France. His son Richard I—*Coer de Lion* or the Lion-hearted—was for the greater part of his ten years' reign outside England, fighting in the Crusades organised by European princes against the Saracens to recover the holy city Jerusalem. While returning home he was imprisoned by Leopold, Duke of Austria, whom he had offended during the Crusade. He was ultimately ransomed but was killed fighting against the King of France who was trying to annex parts of French territory belonging to the King of England.

John, Richard's brother, who succeeded him was the worst king England has ever had. He was indolent, weak and treacherous. He murdered his little nephew Arthur, a deed which horrified the country.

He was forced to sign the Magna Carta (1214), the great charter of English liberties. Not being a fighter, he lost all or almost all his French territories. Yet one great consequence followed from this loss. English kings now began to pay more attention to England and English affairs. The two races began to mix more freely and learn and speak each other's language. This process of intermingling of the two languages ultimately gave to England its natural speech. John was succeeded by his nine-year old son Henry III. When he came of age, he proved to be as bad and foolish as John or almost. But out of bad comes good—sometimes, at any rate. The bad rule of Henry gave to England its Parliament. The barons assembled in a great council headed by Simon de Montford, who had married the king's sister. They decided that the King's

actions were to be supervised by a committee. Though Simon was killed in the battle, this council called in history Simon's Parliament was continued by Edward I and became a permanent institution to check misrule.

Edward I conquered Wales and to show that the conquest was to be permanent, conferred on his son the title of Prince of Wales, a title ever since held by the eldest son of English kings. In his attempts to conquer Scotland he committed many acts of cruelty and injustice against the Scots but failed to subdue them. His son Edward II was too weak a king to succeed where his father had failed and was defeated at Bannockburn (1314). The Scots even ravaged the north of England. The king was deposed and his son Edward III was put on the throne. He was wise enough to see that England could not conquer Scotland and in 1328 peace was made between the two countries. Robert Bruce who had withstood the armed might of three Edwards was recognised King of Scotland.

Edward III started what is called the Hundred Years War with France which covers the reign of five English Kings: Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI. It began in 1337 and went on intermittently till 1453. As Edward III's mother was a French princess, he claimed the throne of France when on the death of the French King Charles IV in 1328, it became necessary to find an heir. His claim was rejected and Edward banned the export of English wool to Flanders. This ruined the Flemish cloth industry and the war started. The highlights of this protracted warfare are the English victories of Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt. The hero of Crecy (1346) was Edward III, that of Poitiers his son Edward the Black Prince (1356), and of Agincourt (1415) Henry V. Henry V was so successful that he married the French King's daughter and was acknowledged heir to the French throne. On the death of the French King Henry's infant son Henry VI was proclaimed king of England. At this crucial point in history appeared a French peasant girl, Joan of Arc, who by her heroic example stirred the desperate French people to drive away the English finally from France. She was sold by a treacherous French faction to the English, who burnt her as a witch at Rouen in 1431. But she had done her work and the English lost all their possessions in France except the town of Calais.

Let us now return to the internal history of England. Edward III died in 1377 and was succeeded by his grandson Richard II, *i.e.* the son of Edward the Black Prince who had died during his father's life-time in 1376. Richard's reign was a troubled one. The country had been devastated by the Black Death or a terrible plague in which about a third of the population had perished (1347-1350). There was a shortage of labourers and wages had risen. Stringent laws against higher wages demanded by the labourers spread discontent and misery among the poor. In Richard's reign, a poll-tax which was levied on every adult pressed heavily on the poor. This

brought their discontent to a climax and the peasants rose in revolt in 1381. This revolt known as Wat Tyler's Rebellion was put down with a heavy hand, but it ended serfdom in England.

Richard was weak, had many enemies and no children. So he was deposed by his cousin Henry of Lancaster who became king Henry IV.

This was opposed by other cousins also descended from Edward III (through his other sons, besides the Black Prince). A marriage between two cousins brought about the union of the two houses of Clarence and York, and the child of this marriage, Richard of York began the wars, known as the Wars of the Roses to turn out the Lancastrian king Henry VI from the throne. They are so called after the emblems of their respective houses—the Red Rose of Lancaster and the White Rose of York.

Henry VI, though a saintly person, was a weak king and subject to fits of insanity. Moreover, the loss of English possessions in France had made the house of Lancaster unpopular. So Henry VI was deposed and a Yorkist became king as Edward IV. His son Edward V, a twelve year old boy and his younger brother Richard were murdered in the tower of London by their uncle, Richard of Gloucester, who made himself king as Richard III. The murder of the two little princes horrified England and the people rallied round Henry Tudor, the Lancastrian heir. After a reign of two years, Richard III was defeated and killed at Bosworth field (1485). Henry Tudor married the heiress of the Yorkist house and thus by uniting the two warring houses brought the struggle to a close.

This Civil War had been a struggle between the nobles. One of them Warwick was called the King-maker, as he could make and unmake kings. At the end of the wars, very few nobles were left and Henry Tudor, now Henry VII, created many nobles of his own choice so that he could depend on their loyalty. As the people were sick of the nobles who had created all this turmoil to satisfy their private ambition, they rallied round the king. Hence the Tudor Kings were very powerful and strong rulers. If they were despots and did not care much for the Parliaments, it was because the people preferred despotic rule to chaos.

CHAPTER 3

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE: FIRST PERIOD (1066—1350)

Middle English transitional between old and modern English—Revival of English language—The influence of French romantic literature—Layamon's *Brut* introducing King Arthur—*Ormulum*, *Ancren Riwle*, *The Owl and the Nightingale*—*Handlyng Syn*, *Cursor Mundi*, *The Prick of Conscience*—*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*—Lyrics

The first period of Middle English literature, like Anglo-Saxon literature, can interest only the advanced or specialist student. So a very brief account of it is all that is necessary for the student of modern English literature which really begins with Chaucer who belongs to the second period of Middle English. Middle English is the name given to the transition period during which old English was changing into modern English. This period lasted roughly 350 years from the Norman Conquest to the end of the fourteenth century.

The literature of the first Middle English period of three centuries has little intrinsic worth, but is historically important in view of the part it played in the evolution of modern English literature. The first 150 years are a blank as nothing noteworthy was produced till the beginning of the thirteenth century. There may be several reasons. Maybe the conquest had stunned English literature into silence, or the limitations of the Anglo-Saxon language prevented it from further advance. Besides, the Normans at the conquest had no literature to offer in its place. French literature was in its infancy at the Conquest, but during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it developed rapidly into the dominant literature of Europe. Whatever the reason for the dearth of literature during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the fact remains that when English literature revived at the beginning of the thirteenth century, it looked to French models and not to Anglo-Saxon. And for a very good reason. The French literature which the Normans now brought to England was gay and colourful in spirit, soft in vocabulary, and musical in its rhymed verse. As opposed to this, the Anglo-Saxon literature was cheerless and humourless in spirit, hard in vocabulary and monotonous in its alliterative doggerel. It is true that it had more thought and

feeling, the 'high seriousness' demanded by Matthew Arnold, but too much of it can be suffocating and there is no denying the fact that Anglo-Saxon poetry is on the whole depressing. French literature, on the other hand, was bright, romantic and entertaining. Whatever the relative merits of the two literatures, the English were captivated by the romantic literature of France which turned the stream of English literature into entirely different channels. France was at the time the cultural centre of Europe, and it is not surprising that the English, a defeated race smarting under a sense of inferiority, copied French models. The position was analogous to that of India under British rule, when Indians adopted not only English ways, but also English literary models in their vernacular writings—a process which is still continuing and which has contributed not a little to the enrichment of Indian literature.

This revival of English literature began in the reign of King John, by which time the two races had begun to mix freely. We have seen how the English and the Normans combined to force John to sign the Magna Carta. The loss of John's French possessions tended further to cement the bonds of unity between the English and the French. English, so far a despised tongue, came to the fore and in course of time replaced French. With English attaining the dignity of a written language, English literature too revived. The first noteworthy work produced under French influence is Layamon's *Brut* written about 1205. This voluminous poem of about 30,000 lines is a legendary history of Britain named after Brut or Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas, one of the heroes of Troy. Brutus is the supposed founder of Britain and of new Troy or London. Layamon brings his account down to Cadwallader, the last of Celtic kings. This work is a translation from French, but what makes it interesting is that it introduces for the first time the story of King Arthur. It also contains among other things the story of king Lear and the last part of *Comus*. More interesting still is Layamon's versification which is a blending of the old and the new. He has not abandoned the Anglo-Saxon alliterative system altogether but now and then stumbles upon rhyme. A little later appeared Orm's *Ormulum*, a verse paraphrase of the Church gospels. This though rhymeless goes further in adopting the French regularity in the number of syllables. Moreover, these syllables form iambic feet. A little later came a prose treatise, the *Ancren Riwle* or the Rule of Anchoresses, containing rules for the guidance of three Anchoresses or ladies who had taken to religious life, but were not strictly governed by the discipline of nuns. The number of French words in it suggests a French original and its prose style is a great advance over the Anglo-Saxon. The most interesting of all the early productions, however, is *The Owl and the Nightingale*, a verse debate between the two birds about their relative merits. It has dropped the Anglo-Saxon alliteration altogether and is written in the rhyming octosyllabic couplets of the French.

All the above mentioned works were produced during the first

quarter of the thirteenth century. The rest of the century is a blank. The principal productions of the first half of the fourteenth century may be considered briefly under three heads: Religious, Romance and Lyric.

Religious: Of the three important religious works, all in verse, one Robert Mannyng's, *Handlyng Sin* (Handbook of sins) is a translation from the French and contains stories or fables about various sins. The other verse work is *Cursor Mundi* (the course of the world), a huge poem in octosyllabic couplets giving the whole story of the Bible together with the lives of the saints, all enriched by the imagination of the anonymous author. The third, *The Prick of Conscience* by Richard Rolle of Hampole, a remarkable hermit, is in octosyllabic couplets sprinkled with decasyllabic lines and describes in detail the horrifying tortures of hell.

Romance: The most important branch of English literature cultivated during this period and for long afterwards was romance. Stories of love and chivalry were very popular in France, the most popular being *Chansons de geste* or songs of heroic deeds, that centred round Charlemagne and his Knights. These became popular in England and led to the production of a great number of romances dealing with heroes of France, Rome, Britain (Celtic) and England. The most interesting of those produced during the first half of the fourteenth century is *Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight*. The Green Knight appears before King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table and challenges anyone to strike him a blow on the condition that he will submit to a return blow from the Green Knight after a year at the Green Chapel. Sir Gawayn gives the blow and cuts off his head, at which, to the amazement of all, the Green Knight calmly picks up the head and marches off. A year after on his way to the Green Chapel, Sir Gawayn stays at a castle and is lavishly entertained by his host. He is visited by the host's wife who tempts him. But he resists her except taking a few kisses and a magic girdle which makes its wearer invulnerable. According to a bargain with the host that they will exchange whatever they gain by hunting or other means, he returns the kisses, but keeps the girdle in view of the awful appointment with the Green Knight, who, it is needless to say, is the host himself who had planned the temptation. For his steadfastness in resisting the main temptation, the Green Knight saves Gawayne's life, inflicting only a slight wound for his concealment of the girdle of invulnerability.

This poem is Anglo-Saxon in its alliterative verse and vocabulary, but is remarkable not only for its story interest but also for its powerful descriptions and touches of humour, dealing with Charlemagne. Besides the Arthurian circle, there were hundreds of other romances, most of them translations or adaptations from French originals dealing with French, English, classical, and even oriental subjects.

Lyric: The third department of literature that was opened to

English was the Lyric. Love is an important motive in lyric and this was absent in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Moreover, lyric being subjective or personal demands variety of metre of which Anglo-Saxon was incapable. These were now supplied by French examples which led to the production of a large number of charming lyrics in England. A few of these have found a place in anthologies. Specimens that follow are the *Cuckoo Song* and *Alison*, a love song.

For word-meanings the reader is referred to *The Oxford Book of English Verse*.

Cuckoo Song

SUMER is icumen in,
 Lhude sing cuccu!
 Groweth sed (seed), and bloweth med (meadow),
 And springeth the wude nu (wood new)—
 Sing cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,
 Lhouth after calve cu (ewe);
 Bulluc sterteth, bukke verteth (loveth),
 Murie sing cuccu!

Cuccu, cuccu, well singes thu, cuccu:
 Ne swike thu naver nu;
 Sing cuccu, nu, sing cuccu,
 Sing cuccu, sing cuccu, nu!

Alison

BYTUENE Mershe and Averil
 When spray biginneth to springe,
 The lutel foul hath hire wyl
 On hyre lud to synge:
 Ich libbe in love-longinge
 For semlokest of alle thynges,
 He may me blisse bringe,
 Ich am in hire baundoun.
 An hendy hap inchabbe y-hent,
 Ichot from hevne it is me sent,
 From alle wymmen my love is lent
 And lyht on Alysoun.

On heu hire her is fayr ynoh,
 Hire browe broune, hire eye blake;
 With lossum chere he on me loh;
 With middel smal and wei y-make;
 Bote he me wolle to hire take
 For to buen hire owen make,
 Long to lyven ichulle forsake
 And feye fallen adoun.
 An hendy hap, etc.

Nihtes when I wende and wake,
 For-thi myn wonges waxeth y on,
 Levedi, al for thine sake
 Longinge is y-lent me on.
 In world nis non so, wyter mon

That al hire bounte telle con;
Hire swyre is whittore than the swon,
And feyrest may in toun.
An hendy hap, etc.

Ich am for wowyng al for-wake.
Wery so water is wore;
Lest eny reve me my make
Ichabbe y-yerned yore.
Betere is tholien whyle sore
Then mournen evermore.
Geynest under gore,
Herkne to my roun.
An hendy hap, etc.

CHAPTER 4

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE SECOND PERIOD (1350—1400)

Langland: *Piers Plowman*—Gower: *Confessio Amentis*

Historical Background. In order to appreciate the work of Chaucer and his contemporaries in its proper perspective it is necessary to recall to our minds the chief historical persons and events of their times. Chaucer lived through the reigns of two kings, Edward III and Richard II and saw the beginning of a third, that of Henry IV. His age presents a glaring contrast between its earlier and later years. At the time of his birth the Hundred Years' War had already begun and as a boy he must have heard of the victories of Edward III and the Black Prince. A still greater victory was won at home a little later when English became the language of the law courts and of Parliament. The victories of Crecy and Poitiers roused a new spirit of national unity and pride but produced little literature except a few patriotic songs. All the great works of this period were produced during the later and troubled years which followed upon the death of Edward III. The reign of Richard II was one of the worst that England has ever known. He was incompetent, capricious and extravagant. The great plague or Black Death had devastated the land, and labour shortage, low wages, and high taxation to meet the cost of the French wars had greatly increased the misery of the masses. The poll-tax levied by Richard II led directly to the Peasants' Revolt or Wat Tyler's Rebellion which was put down with a heavy hand. To the social and political troubles of the times were added religious troubles caused by a corrupt Church. The bishops who had amassed great wealth lived a life of ease and luxury, the lower clergy were ignorant and indolent, and even the friars who had done good work in the beginning had become notoriously greedy and corrupt. This general corruption in the Church roused John Wycliff to a fury of reform through his pamphlets and preachers. His followers came to be known as Lollards and their movement Lollardy. The movement caused many uprisings but they were all mercilessly suppressed. Lollardy went underground and the Reformation in England was delayed by 150 years. John Wycliff 'the morning star of the Reformation' had, however, done his work, not only by his crusade against the corruption of the Church, but by translating the Gospels into English, the first translation to appear in any modern language.

Curiously enough it was during this troubled and unhappy period that English poetry entered upon its first blossoming season. The two races had become almost one and in spite of many-sided social unrest there was a general feeling of national independence and pride. This new-born spirit found expression not only in satire, denunciation and lamentations, but also in the joy of life.

The three poets of this period are Chaucer, Langland, and Gower. As Chaucer is much the greatest of the three and needs a more detailed consideration, let us first dispose of the other two.

WILLIAM LANGLAND

William Langland, the traditional author of *Piers' Plowman* is the last great poet to write in the Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. This revival of an obsolete technique late in the fourteenth century is an unsolved mystery. The author himself also remains a mystery, for little definite is known about him. From evidence both external and internal the personality of the author built up by scholars is as follows: He was born about 1332 in the Western part of England near the Malvern hills. Educated in a monastery school, and having failed as a churchman in minor orders, he shifted to London. Here he made his living as a beggar singing psalms for the souls of the dead. Here he wrote his poem.

The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman is a huge poem of alliterative verse divided into a large number of a passus' or Cantos. Prof. Skeat distinguishes three main versions: A, B and C. Texts B and C appear to represent later alterations or revisions at different times. The first version is believed to have been written about 1362, the second about 1377 and the third about 1398. The Prologue describes how on a May morning the poet fell asleep by the side of a brook on the Malvern hills and saw in a vision or dream 'a fair field full of folk'. It is a bustling scene crowded with people of all sorts, honest as well as dishonest—ploughmen, merchants and minstrels, pilgrims, hermits, friars, palmers, pardoners and churchmen.

The Cantos then develop the allegory. A lovely lady, the Holy Church, appears and tells the dreamer to seek the Truth (God). On his asking what is Truth, she tells him it is Love. Two other characters are then introduced, Falsehood and lady Meed. (Meed=Reward in bad sense, Bribery). A marriage between the two is proposed but is opposed by Theology. They then proceed to London to obtain the King's verdict. On the king's threatening them with punishment, Falsehood and company run away. Lady Meed confesses her sins to a friar and is promised salvation if she presents new windows to the friars' convent. This cheap method of winning salvation is then denounced by the author. The king then proposes to marry Meed to his knight, Conscience, but Conscience objects and denounces the lady. So Reason is called and after a long argument in which Wit, Wisdom and Wrong take part, he decides that no mercy should be shown to Wrong (Wrong-doer) and that every good deed should be rewarded. The king is so pleased with Reason that he decides to keep him always as his counsellor. At this point the scene changes to the field of folk and Reason asks them to seek saint Truth and not Saint James or other saints at Rome. Then follows the repentance of the crowd and

the confession of Seven Deadly Sins so common in medieval literature. The sins are Pride, Luxury, Envy, Wrath, Avarice, Gluttony and Sloth. The confession of the Glutton is the most brilliant and dramatic. On his way to the church he is tempted by a brewer-woman to drink and he gets so drunk as to wake up two days later.

The repentant crowd decide to start on their pilgrimage in search of Truth, but no one knows the way. At this point appears Piers Plowman after whom the poem is named. He promises to lead the company after he has ploughed his half acre of land. He asks everybody to work hard at his job, and those who refuse or shirk are made to work by hunger. As they are about to start on the journey, Piers receives from truth the Pope's pardon covering not only Piers and his heirs but all who helped Piers ploughing and sowing. A priest who reads the paper finds no pardon but only the simple statement that those who do good will get salvation and those who do evil will be damned. The poem in its first version ends here with the poet's passionate plea that only good works can obtain salvation and not pardons and indulgences.

The rest of the poem comprising the second and third versions is the sequel to the first and contains the triple vision of Dowel (Do-well), Dobet (Do-better) and Dobest (Do-best). It is, however, too complicated, and chaotic to be reduced to a coherent summary. The author does not succeed in his second or third attempt to round off his religious or moral lesson. The general impression is that the author was in search of good life, of salvation, of God. At the end Mercy is shown as triumphant over strict justice.

Criticism. Some critics have bestowed high praise on *Piers Plowman*, and so far as the matter of the poem is concerned, the praise is justified. It is a frankly didactic poem concerned with religious reform. Roused by the degenerate Christians of his times Langland lashes out against the vices of the clergy, especially, their gluttony, sloth and avarice. He attacks social and political iniquities too, and because his hero is a ploughman, some have called him a rebel or revolutionary. But his aim was not to destroy society but to improve and purify its moral life. He idolised Piers the ploughman, because he comes nearest to the ideal of a Christian, Christ having identified himself with the poor and the humble. The poem has vigour, intensity, and sincerity, and because the author spoke for the people, it became immediately popular and continued to be so till the sixteenth century.

So far as the literary merit of the poem is concerned, it cannot be placed very high. For one thing, the author's handling of the device of the dream allegory is clumsy. It is not one dream or vision, but a number of visions confusedly following one another. The poem is not a harmonious whole, and it is difficult to follow the rambling and tortuous course of the plot, if it can be called a plot. For another, it has little or no music except in the opening lines and in a few other places. On the whole the poem has little attraction for the modern reader except a few lively descriptions and dialogues.

Its piety is narrow and puritanical and doesn't appeal to cultured readers of today.

GOWER (1332—1408)

Gower, a court poet like Chaucer was both his friend and rival. Chaucer in his dedication of *Troilus and Cressid* to Gower calls him 'moral Gower', a title that has stuck to him ever since. He was a typical poet of the time who wrote in three languages: French, Latin, and English. His French works consist of some fifty *ballades* or love songs and one huge poem *Speculum Meditantis*, a long sermon in verse on the immorality of the age. His Latin work *Vox Clamantis* is concerned with Wat Tyler's Rebellion of 1381. As he was a landlord of Kent, the country in which the rebellion had broken out, he was frightened. Having a vested interest, he voiced in this poem his own fears of the nightmarish uprising. Though not in sympathy with the popular cause, he vehemently denounces the social evils which had led to popular disaffection. The poem ends with an appeal to the high and mighty to mend their ways and to listen to the voice of the people, which is the voice of God.

His English work, *Confessio Amentis*, is an enormous poem of 14000 octosyllabic lines. He says he wrote this at the instance of King Richard who had complained that nobody wrote in the English tongue. The subject is Love, not because it is to the poet's taste—he would much rather write a moral book—but because the people preferred amusement to wisdom.

For thilke cause, if that ye rede,
I wolde go the middel wey
And write a boke betwene the twey
Somwhat of lust (love, pleasure), somewhat of lore
(learning, wisdom).

The poet approaches Venus, the goddess of love, who asks him to make his confession to her priest, Genius—a personage borrowed from *Romant de la Rose*. Before hearing the confession Genius tells him stories to illustrate the seven deadly sins and their subdivisions so that the poet may know if he is guilty and confess accordingly. After the confession, the poet is mocked and dismissed by Venus as being too old for love. He is advised to stick to morality which he has pursued so long.

The stories drawn from classical and medieval sources are curious and interesting and some of them were borrowed by Chaucer. But their connection with morals drawn from them is absurd. Gower shows power and fluency of narration, but is too long-winded and hopelessly dull. The fact is that though he had enough learning and was not lacking in grace, he was too puritanical to write successfully of love. He lacked vivacity, charm, humour—qualities which Chaucer possessed in an eminent degree and which he himself admits in his rival when he makes Venus adopt Chaucer as her true devotee:

Of dities (ditties) and songes glad
The which he for my sake made
The land fulfilled is over al.

He should have been content with being 'moral Gower'.

CHAPTER 5

CHAUCER

Chaucer's Life and Character—Works of the French Period: *Romaunt of the Rose*, *Book of the Duchess*, *Parliament of Fowls*—Works of the Italian Period: *House of Fame*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Legend of Good Women*—Works of the English Period: *The Canterbury Tales*—Chaucer's achievements—How to read Chaucer—Chaucer as a social historian—Prose of the Age of Chaucer: Chaucer's prose tales and the *Astrolabe*—Wycliff's Bible—Maundeville's *Travels*.

(**Life.** Geoffrey Chaucer, the son of John Chaucer, a wine merchant of London, was born about 1340. His father was connected with the royal family perhaps as purveyor of wine and Chaucer himself became at seventeen a page to the wife of the Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III. Two years later he went to the French wars where he was taken prisoner and was ransomed by the King himself. After his return he was appointed Valet of the King's chamber. He was certainly married and had a son named Lewis to whom he dedicated his *Treatise on the Astrolabe*.) Not much is known of his wife, Philippa, who is believed to have been sister to the wife of John of Lancaster, his great patron. She is said to have died in 1387. From about 1370 when he was thirty to 1378 he was employed on diplomatic missions to France and Italy. About this time he was a member of Parliament for Kent and also held the office of comptroller of Customs in the port of London. In addition he was granted a pension and was generally prosperous throughout life except for a brief spell during the disgrace of John of Gaunt under Richard II. He died in 1400 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

From his portrait together with the personal descriptions of himself in the *House of Fame* and the *Parliament of Fowls* as well as in the *Canterbury Tales*, we picture him to ourselves as a plump, mild-mannered, good natured, rather shy but jovial man. He makes himself out as a simpleton, but this is obviously a pose—his way of laughing at himself. We know nothing of his schooling, but from the wide scholarship he displays in his works it is evident he must have received the benefits of thorough, liberal education. He was an ardent lover of books from which he could be weaned only by the beauties of Nature—

And as for me, though that my wit be lyte,
 On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
 And to hem yeve I feyth and ful credence,
 An, in myn herte have hem in reverence
 So hertely, that ther is game noon
 That fro my bokes maketh me to goon,
 But hit be seldom, on the holyday;
 Save, certeynly, whan that the month of May
 Is comen, and that I here the foules singe,
 And that the floures ginnen for to springe—
 Farwel my book and my devocioun!

(*Legend of Good Women*, Prologue, 11, 29 ff.)

His devotion to books, however, did not turn him into a visionary. He trusted to books for guidance only in matters of which nobody has direct experience, such as heaven and hell—

That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree,
 That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe
 Ne may of hit noon other weys witen
 But as he hath heard seyde, or founde it writen.

(*Legend of Good Women*, Prologue, 11, 5 ff.)

(For the rest, he looked upon the spectacle of life directly with his eyes. His busy life and diverse occupations enabled him to observe life at close quarters and at all levels. He was page, soldier, diplomat, official, member of Parliament, courtier. He had thus unique opportunities for observation by coming into contact with all sorts and conditions of men from royalty to rogues. He had travelled in France and Italy, which must have enriched his experience and broadened his mental horizon. Altogether he had a most favourable training ground for a writer.) Given the necessary genius, what wonder if such a man should blossom into a great poet?

We have no certain evidence of the dates of Chaucer's works. The invention of printing was to come some forty years after his death and in his time publication of books as we know it today was unknown.

The theory, therefore, that divides Chaucer's works into three periods—French, Italian and English—is justified on grounds of convenience, if on no other. In the first or French period he wrote *Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowls* and a few minor poems, mostly lyrics; in the second or Italian period he wrote *Troilus and Cressid*, *the House of Fame* and *the Legend of Good Women*; and in the third or English period he wrote *the Canterbury Tales*. (This classification, however, does not imply any hard or fast division between one period and another. It simply means that he was dominated by French or Italian influence at a certain period, i.e. he was merely imitative.) In the English period while he still continued to draw upon French and Italian sources he shook off his foreign domination and became independent.

French Period—*Romaunt of the Rose*. This is a translation of the *Roman de la Rose* in octosyllabic couplets. As this French poem is the most famous allegorical romance of the middle ages and references to it are so common in English literature, a brief notice

of it would not be out of place.) Written in the thirteenth century, it is an enormous poem in two parts, the first and shorter by Gillaume de Lorris, the second and much longer by Jean de Meung. It started and fixed the tradition of courtly love found again and again in later literature.) The conventional machinery is that of a dream in which the narrator sees a beautiful garden beside a river bank. It is a May morning with flowers blooming and birds singing. The lover enters the garden and his courtship of the lady is allegorically represented as an attempt to pluck the rose hidden there. The lady encourages or discourages him according to her moods. Her moods or qualities such as kindness and courtesy which favour his suits, or fear and shame which repel it, are personified. The whole atmosphere, redolent of perfume, luxury, laughing and dancing, is that of courtly life of love and leisure.

(The work fascinated Chaucer and he is never tired of mentioning it in his other works. It was, in a way, this poem that initiated him into poetry and nursed his genius by helping to form his style and versification.)

(After translating *Roman de la Rose*, Chaucer essayed the allegorical poems on the same model which were then the universal fashion. He followed the stock formula of the dream allegory for many years, only now and then expressing his native genius for humorous description.) The first allegorical poem is the *Book of the Duchess*, an elegy written on the death in 1369 of Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, wife of John of Gaunt. It is in octosyllabic couplets and expresses the husband's grief and sings the praises of the Duchess.

(The second of the allegorical poems is the *Parliament of Fowls*. Nature has called a grand Parliament of birds to celebrate St. Valentre's day (February 14) by choosing their mates. The birds make speeches in the courtly-love fashion, some defending constancy, others advocating free love. Though the form and material are conventional, the debate is made lively by the poet's deft touches of drama and humour. (The poem is in the seven line stanza, also called rhyme royal from) its use by King James I in his *King's Quair*. (The line is decasyllabic and the rhyme scheme *ababbcc*.)

(Of Chaucer's lyrical poems, the earliest are believed to have been lost. But whatever pieces in this line we have—his ballads and roundels—whether of early or later date show his mastery of these poems too. The popular ballad 'Flee from the Press' is a good example. In this he praises the life of quite contentment far from the madding crowd. But it is quite clear that he was not quite at home in lyrical expression, and that his special gift lay in narration.)

Italian Period (After his visit to Italy in 1372, Chaucer produced poems which bear unmistakable evidence of Italian influence—that of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.)

Dante, of course, had been dead for over fifty years, but Chaucer must have read the *Divine Comedy*, most probably immediately before writing the *House of Fame*. It is of the dream allegory

variety in octosyllables, and in the present instance a curious mixture of scientific learning, satire, humour and shrewd criticism of life.) In a dream the poet, like Dante, is carried by an eagle to Heaven to see the House of Fame. It is situated on a rock of ice. As the ice has melted away, it has obliterated some letters out of every one of the famous names engraved upon it. This shows the transitoriness of most fame. Only a few names of antiquity have retained their lustre. What follows shows the comic perversity of the Goddess of Fame in granting her favours. She grants fame indiscriminately to both deserving and undeserving and withholds it from both with equal impartiality. Then there is the House of Rumours which is built of twigs, full of holes. The house is buzzing with rumours which swell as they are passed on from one man to another until they escape through the holes. (The poem ends here abruptly.) The interest of this poem lies in the poet's charming self-characterisation, particularly in his candid confession that he is not fit for the sublime heights of Dante and feels safer with his feet planted on the earth. The eagle too is a very humorous character, and the dramatic and humorous touches in the conversation between him and the poet are thoroughly Chaucerian.

(We do not know if Chaucer met Petrarch and Boccacio. He mentions Petrarch but not Boccacio, though it is from him that he borrowed most. From Petrarch's Latin work he borrowed the story of the patient Griselda told by the Clerk in the *Canterbury Tales*. From Boccacio he borrowed the story of Palamon and Arcite, which becomes the *Knight's Tale* in the Canterbury collection, and *Troilus and Cressida*. While the *Knight's Tale* is an abridgement of Boccacio's *Teseide*, *Troilus* is an enlargement of his *Il Filostrato* (the love-stricken). It is written in rhyme royal stanza and is the longest single poem of Chaucer's. Though Chaucer borrowed the plot of *Troilus* from Boccacio, his treatment of it is very free both in conception of character and in sentiment.) Chaucer is not so hard on the faithless Cressida as Boccacio and softens her character accordingly. While the Italian depicts passion, Chaucer delineates character. He shows his characteristic genius for realistic and humorous characterisation in Pandarus, the uncle of Cressida, who acts as a go-between in bringing his niece and her lover together. (His method of dealing with the Italian original is not unlike that which Shakespeare made his own two centuries after him.)

(Another poem written under Italian influence is the *Legend of Good Women*. The Prologue though allegorical is by far the most interesting part of the poem. In a dream the poet is rebuked by Cupid for his attacks on women in his works like *Romaunt of the Rose* and *Troilus and Cressida*. Alcestis* intercedes on behalf of the poet whose penance is reduced to writing of true and faithful women drawn from historical and classical stories and legends, such as Cleopatra, Lucrece, Medea, Philomela, Thisbe,

*In Greek mythology the wife of Admetus. She gave her life to save her husband's—therefore a fit companion for the god of love.

etc. (The poem remains unfinished, presumably because Chaucer found the stories of these fair martyrs monotonous and boring. The chief interest of the poem for the student is that it is Chaucer's first experiment in the heroic couplet in which he was to write the *Canterbury Tales*, and which together with blank verse became the standard metre of later English poetry.)

English Period: The Canterbury Tales. So far Chaucer had been merely a borrower, a translator or adapter. He had been a slave to the allegorical convention and his own native genius had found vent only in occasional flashes of realism and humour in his dream allegories. Two of these—the *House of Fame* and the *Legend of Good Women*—he left unfinished, the former one presumably because he found it too artificial for his taste and the latter because he found it monotonous. Then suddenly his native genius suppressed so long broke forth from its bondage and found full and unhampered expression in the *Canterbury Tales*. He had seen much, had read much, and must have had a miscellaneous collection of stories to tell. He conceived the idea of a pilgrimage to bring together an assorted company of people as tellers of those tales. The tales interesting enough in themselves acquire additional interest from the vivid pen portraits of the pilgrims who tell them. We are no longer in the world of allegorical abstractions, ancient gods or heroes, but in the real world of living men and women. He ushered in the era of modern literature and established himself as the greatest European poet of his time, leaving far behind the contemporary poetry of France and Italy on which he had been nourished.

The Prologue

(The *Canterbury Tales* begin with a Prologue which constitutes the framework for the tales. Thirty pilgrims including Chaucer have put up at the Tabard inn in Southwark. They are bound on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury. After supper the host of Tabard offers to join the party and be a guide and master of ceremonies. He proposes that to beguile the tedium of the journey each pilgrim should tell two tales on the forward journey and two on the return journey. The teller of the best story—to be judged by the host—is to be entertained to a supper at the Tabard at the general expense.)

The thirtyone pilgrims are drawn from all classes except royalty. The military or fighting class is represented by the Knight, his son and their Yeoman; a Doctor, a Lawyer, a Clerk or Student of Oxford and the poet himself represent the liberal professions. Those connected with the land are a Franklin, a Reeve and a Ploughman; the trade is represented by a Merchant, a Shipman, a Haberdasher, and the Host of the Tabard. The crafts are represented by the Wife of Bath, a Carpenter, a Weaver, a Dyer and a Tapicer or Tapestry-maker. A Manciple (buyer of provisions for a college or Inn of

court) and a Cook complete the secular group. The Religious Order, the most numerous of all, includes the poor Parson, a Monk, a Friar, a Prioress with her chaplain nun and three priests, a Summoner (who served summons of the ecclesiastical Courts) and a Pardoner (authorised seller of Pardons).

(The Prologue is a masterpiece of characterisation. Nothing like it existed in medieval literature, nor has it been equalled, much less surpassed, to this day. It is a picture-gallery depicting the contemporary society of England in all its variety and colour. Each pilgrim is at once an individual and a type of the class or calling to which he belongs. The technique which Chaucer has employed to achieve this is simply admirable. He first sketches the outline of a character by broadly describing the characteristic or typical features of his profession. Then he fills it up with minute details, physical or moral, that make it palpitate with life. And all this is done with the careless air of a master artist. He piles up the details in a casual, haphazard, table-talk fashion and yet with such touches of ironic humour as to make the resultant portrait not only strongly individual but highly amusing.) His carelessness is studied and deliberate and is designed to give the impression of naturalness and spontaneity. This naivete indeed is the most charming quality of Chaucer's. In the midst of a most finely wrought description of the Prioress—so simple, shy, prim—Chaucer innocently and casually observes how elaborately careful she was in her table-manners. We have thus an amusing picture of a nun aping a society girl.

The minute details which Chaucer's keen eye observes in a pilgrim have always a point. His purpose is to produce a humorous effect. It is not for nothing that the brawny miller who can break the heaviest door with his head has been provided with a wart crowned with a tuft of hairs on the tip of his nose. He needs, indeed deserves, this grotesque decoration. Similarly the rascally summoner has pimples on his fire-red face. Where there are no such physical peculiarities to embellish his pictures, Chaucer seizes upon moral qualities for his irony and satire. The stingy Doctor of Physic

Kept that he wan (won) in pestilence.
For gold in physic is a cordial,
Therefore he lovede gold in special.

The Friar who was easy with his absolutions where payment was good is thus satirised:

He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
Ther as he wiste to han a good pitaunce;
For unto povre order for to yive
Is signe that a man is wel y-shrive
For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,
He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
For many a man so hard is of his herte,
He may not wepe al-thogh him sore smerte.
Therefore, in stede of weping and preyeres,
Men moot yeve silver to the povre freres.

One is tempted to quote passage after passage from the prologue in illustration of Chaucer's ironical humour. But the Prologue has to be read whole to be enjoyed. It is enough to say that with the exception of the Knight, the Poor parson and the Ploughman, there is not a single character that escapes Chaucer's ironical humour. His wide sympathies and tolerant humanity enabled him to give us types of men and women who with minor variations are essentially the same in all ages. We no longer have Summoners and Pardoners, but their progeny remains and carries on the same trades of exploitation and trickery, though under other names and in other forms. Professor Saintsbury denies Chaucer's pilgrims that element of universality which we associate with the characters of Shakespeare. This is being hyper-critical. He admits they are astonishingly brilliant types. If this means anything, it means they are memorable and a character can't be memorable without a strongly marked individuality. It is true not all the pilgrims are equally memorable. But who can forget the "verray parfit gentle knight", or the prim Prioress or the jolly Host, or the bouncing Wife of Bath? Indeed, the last-named is fit to take her place next to Falstaff, not only as a comic character but as his right mate. Having described the pilgrims it now remained for Chaucer to make them tell tales suited to their calling and character. But it appears that he was not yet done with character painting. So he introduces, as he proceeds with the tales, other though shorter prologues to add more lines and colours to his pictures. There are some sixteen of them given to various pilgrims including the Canon's Yeoman who had joined the party on the way. They are self-revealing in purpose, lively and dramatic in manner and like the main prologue, ironical in tone. The longest and the best is that of the Wife of Bath. In the main Prologue Chaucer had only hinted at her character; it is here that he gets the opportunity to elaborate it and make it emerge as his greatest comic creation. Her discourse is not only a revelation of her own sexual morality, which is that of the hen-coop, but is at the same time a brilliant though unconscious satire on women. The Pardoner's prologue is also remarkable, being a shameless exposure of his trickery and hypocrisy. These prologues together with the Host's words to the pilgrims as he invites them to tell their tales, their comments and criticisms, and above all, their squabbles on the journey not only link up the tales in a sequence, but serve to give life, movement, and drama to the cavalcade as it moves on its way. Moreover, in these bustling scenes the pilgrims reveal themselves further by their words and actions.

The Tales ★

Chaucer did not live to complete his entire scheme, which would demand 124 tales. Actually there are in all twenty-four tales of which two—*Chaucer's Tale of Melibee* and the *Parson's Tale* are in prose and the rest in verse. The verse with the exception of the

burlesque romance of Sir Topas, is either in heroic couplets or in stanzas. The tales are of varying lengths, the longest being the *Knights Tale*, the shortest the *Cook's*. They are a mixed bag, showing the widest variety in point of subject, ranging from chivalry, romance, devotion and virtue on the one hand to low intrigue and plain bawdry on the other. They are drawn from all sources both literary and popular. The literary sources include Italian, classical and oriental, while the popular sources were the *fabliaux* or verse stories usually humorous and satirical that circulated among the masses.

The tales may be grouped into two broad divisions, serious and humorous—twenty serious, four humorous. Of the serious class the highlights are: the *Knight's*, the *Man of Law's*, the *Prioress's*, the *Nun's Priest's*, the *Clerk's*, the *Squire's*, and the *Franklin's*. The humorous group comprises the *Miller's*, the *Reeve's*, the *Summoner's* and the *Merchant's*.)

The Serious Group

The *Knight's Tale* is high romance which tells of the rivalry between two royal cousins, Palamon and Arcite, for Emily, sister to queen Hippolyta, wife of Duke Theseus of Athens. The *Lawyer's* tale of the adventures and sufferings of Constance, daughter of a Roman emperor, the *Prioress's* tale of the murder of a little Christian schoolboy in the Jewish quarter of an Asian town, and the *Clerk's* tale of the patient Griselda are all characterised by extreme tenderness, piety and pathos. It is strange that in the face of these three stories Matthew Arnold should have found Chaucer deficient in 'high seriousness'. The *Nun's Priest's* tale of the Cock Chanticleer and the Fox is one of the most entertaining stories of the serious group, containing as it does, some of the slyest and shrewdest remarks upon women. The *Squire's* half-told tale "of Cambuscan bold" is an Eastern story of magic and mystery. The *Franklin's* tale is remarkable for the magnanimity and high sense of honour displayed by a Knight of Brittany. His faithful wife during his continued absence playfully promises to accept the importunate suit of a lover on the condition that he clear the coast of Brittany of its rocks, a condition impossible of fulfilment. With the help of a magician, however, the lover removes the rocks or creates that illusion. The Knight returns and learning of the distress of his wife willingly asks her to keep her promise at whatever cost of pain and shame to himself. Impressed by the husband's sacrifice, the lover too rises to the occasion and releases the lady from her promise. The magician, not to be outdone, declines the reward for his services promised by the lover.

The Humorous Group

The *Miller's* tale makes fun of a carpenter whose wife is seduced by a student. This annoys the Reeve, a carpenter, who retaliates by telling a story in which a miller's wife and daughter are seduced

by two students. As the Friar's tale is an attack on the summoner, the latter takes his own back with compound interest by telling a filthy and farcical tale ridiculing the friar. The Merchant's tale of January and May is a shrewd satire on unequal marriages. The old codger, appropriately named January, marries May, a pretty young girl, fresh and fair as her name. The scene where she is caught in the act with the youthful servant of the house, in a tree, is a rare piece of farce. While all these stories are frankly obscene, the Summoner's tale beats all the others in coarseness and is reminiscent of the Urdu poet, Chirkeen. They are told with relish, a verve and vigour not to be found in the serious stories. Chaucer must have enjoyed writing them and has succeeded in imparting his spirit of uninhibited fun to his readers. They are strong meat, no doubt, but if you are not too squeamish, they are first class entertainment.

It is idle to speculate on Chaucer's own contribution to the tales. The Host had asked the pilgrims to tell 'Of adventures that whylom han bifalle', *i.e.* stories from the ancient past. And that is exactly what they are. The pilgrims were not expected to invent stories. The only exception is the Canon's Yeoman's tale recounting the tricks of his master, the alchemist Canon, who had run away after joining the pilgrims. Some believe it to have been invented by Chaucer to revenge himself on some alchemist who had duped him. Be that as it may, Chaucer is frankly a borrower so far as the content of the stories is concerned. His own contribution consists in the manner of telling them, in the art, that is to say, of embellishing them with all the resources of rhetoric at his command. The stories have been happily assigned to their tellers except in a few cases. The Merchant's bawdy tale, for example, would have been more appropriate in the mouth of the Wife of Bath whose prologue is in character, but not the tale. Similarly the Franklin's tale, so full of scholarship, is entirely out of character and should have been given to a learned member of the party. It is evident that Chaucer did not have the time to round off even his limited collection, to say nothing of completing the scheme promised in the Prologue.

The book ends with Chaucer's 'Retractions'—an apology in which, while taking leave of his readers, he retracts or revokes all his secular writings including such of the Canterbury Tales as tend towards sin, and prays Lord Jesus Christ to forgive him and have mercy on his soul.

Criticism

The Canterbury Tales were Chaucer's greatest work. They were not only his latest and maturest, but also his longest work. All the qualities of Chaucer's poetry found separately in his other works are exhibited here most characteristically and to the best advantage. As we read the Tales we are struck by the clarity, the simplicity and the precision of his style. Simplicity in literature is one of the most difficult things to attain and is the characteristic

only of the greatest. The tone throughout is even but is saved from monotony by the poet's light-heartedness. He is so lively and vivacious. Then we notice the admirable restraint of his style. There is pathos enough in his tales but he keeps his emotion perfectly under control. There is no weeping and wailing and tearing of hair in the pathetic tales of Griselda, Constance or the little Christian martyr. His humour too is of the quiet sort and provokes smiles rather than boisterous laughter. It is only in the avowedly non-serious tales that he departs from his usual level of sobriety and good manners. In these he lets himself go with a mischievous abandon that would easily place him at the head of all tellers of smutty stories.

Chaucer's style is, moreover, racy and fluent. Verses come down cascading from his pen almost effortlessly. He shows no restraint here. On the other hand, this facility of versification makes him garrulous and long-winded. It is not surprising, therefore, that now and then we come upon patches that are pure padding. To take one example from the Monk's Tale. Describing the murder of Julius Ceasar, the monk says:

This false Brutus, and his other foon (friends)
 And strikede him with boydekins anon (bodkins anon)
 With many a wounde and thus they lete him lyes;
 But never gronte (groaned) he at no strook (stroke) but oon (one)
 Or elles (else) at two (unless) but if his storie lye (lie).

But who thinks of Chaucer's defects while reading him? His garrulities, his paddings, his shocking obscenities—all these he carries off by his charming artlessness and unfailing good humour. Notice the naivete of the following comment on women:

Wommennes counseils been ful ofte Colde;
 (Women's Counsels are full often cold)
 Wommannes Counsel broghte us first to wo,
 (Women's Counsel brought us first to woe)
 And made Adam fro paradys to go,
 (And made Adam from Paradise to go)
 Ther as he was ful mery, and wel at ese—
 (Where he was full merry, and well at ease)
 But for I noot, to whom it mighte displese,
 (But for I know not, to whom it might displese)
 If I conseil of women wolde blame,
 (If I counsel of women would blame)
 Pass over, for I seyde it in my game,
 (Pass over that, for I said it in my game)
 Rede auctours, wher they trete of swich matere
 (Read authorities, where they treat of such matters)
 And what they seyn of wommen ye may here.
 (And what they say of women you may hear)
 Thisse been the cokkes wordes, and not myne;
 (These are the Cock's words, and not mine)
 I can noon harm of no womman divyne.
 (I can no harm of no woman think)
 (—*The Nun's Priest's Tale*).

The art of this artlessness shines not only through his good humoured comments but throughout the tales—through his narra-

tion as well as characterisation. The art which fuses so completely with its matter could belong only to an original genius. This genius, however, is not so much the genius of a poet as that of a novelist and dramatist. Chaucer's gift lay not in lyric but in narration and characterisation. In the words of Saintsbury: "His expression is the expression of the poet; his thought the thought of the dramatist or novelist."

CHAUCER'S HUMOUR

The most distinctive characteristic of Chaucer's writings and specially of the *Canterbury Tales* is his humour. It is a pervasive quality and is found not only in the avowedly humorous tales but also in the serious ones. The humour is ironical or satirical, but neither the irony nor the satire is harsh. It is gentle and tolerant. Chaucer is always indulgent to the weaknesses of average humanity. Having nothing of the reformer in his composition he takes people as he finds them. This shows his understanding and wide sympathies. Being a realist he is impressed by the contrast between the ideal and the real and is content to paint the real. But we know from the realistic literature of the twentieth century how dull and drab realism can be. Chaucer's realism is saved from this drabness by his good-natured humour. A keen observer and a kind critic he throws over his characters such a colouring of humour as to make them figures of romance.

We have seen this in his portraits of the Prologue. To illustrate his humour from the tales one would have to quote a greater part of the book. Still we may note the following examples:

(1) **The Clerk's Tale.** He knocks the bottom off the idealistic tale of Griselda by making the clerk say at the end:

But O word, lordinges, herkeneth er I go
 (But one word, lords, listen before I go)
 It were ful hard to finde now a dayes
 (It would be very hard to find now a days)
 In al a toun Griseldes three or two
 (In all the town Griseldes three or two)
 For, if that they were put to swich assayes
 (For if they were put to such assays or trials)
 The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes
 (The gold of them hath now so bad alloys)
 With bras, that though the coyne be fair at ye,
 (With brass, that though the coin be fair at all)
 It wolde rather breste a two than plye.
 (It would rather break into two than bend).

And then how playful and mischievous is the irony of the advice offered to wives in the 'Envoy' (parting words).

Ye archewyves, stondeth at defence,
 (Ye arch wives stand at defence)
 Sin ye be stronge as is a greet camille
 (Since you are strong as is a great camel)

Ne suffreth not that men yow doon offence.
 (No, suffer not men's abuses)
 An sclendre wyves, feble as in bataille
 (And slender wives too feeble to fight)
 Beth egre as is a tygre yond in Inde
 (Be fierce as an Indian tiger)
 Ay clappeth asa mill, I you consail.
 (Yes, be noisy as a mill, I counsel you)

(2) **The Miller's Tale.** The miller's words to the protesting Reeve:

An housbond shal not been inquisitif
 (A husband should not be inquisitive)
 Of goddes privetee, nor of his wyf
 (Of God's secrets nor of his wife)
 So he may finde goddes foyson there,
 (So he may find God's plenty there)
 Of the remenent nedeth nat enquere)
 (Of the remainder need not inquire)

(3) **Sir Topas.** The Host's description of Chaucer:

'What man artow ? quod he;
 (What man art thou? said he;)
 Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare
 (Thou lookest as thou wouldst find a hare)
 For ever upon the ground I see thee stare.
 Approche neer and loke up merily
 (Approach near and look up merrily)
 Now war you, Sirs, and lat this man have place
 (Now alert you, Sirs, and let this man have place)
 He in the waast is shape as wel as I
 (He in the waist is shaped as well as I)
 The host is broad of girth
 This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
 (This would be a puppet (doll) in an arm to embrace)
 For any womman, smal or fair of face.
 He semeth elvish by his countenaunce
 (He seems elfish (*i.e.* mysterious) by his countenance)
 For un-to no wight dooth he daliaunce.
 (For unto no person does he dalliance—'talk')

(4) **The Monk's Tale.** The Host to the fat Monk:

I pray to god, yeve him confusion
 (I pray to God, give him confusion)
 That first thee broghte un-to religioun
 Thou woldest han been a trede-foul a right
 (Thou wouldst have been a copulating cock, all right)
 Haddestow as greet a leve, as thou hast might
 (Hadst thou as great a leave, as thou hast strength)
 To parfourne at thy lust in engendrure
 (To perform all thy lust in engendering)
 Thou haddest bigeten many a creature
 (Thou wouldst have begotten many a creature).

(5) **The Wife of Bath's Tale.** In her Prologue she says that all the slanders on women have been written by Clerks or men of learning:

The clerk, whan he is old, and may noght do
 Of Venus werkes worth his old sho
 (The works of Venus (love-making) any more than his old shoe)

Than sit he doun and writ in his dotage
 (Then sits he down and writes in his dotage)
 That wommen can not keep hir mariage
 (That women cannot keep their marriage (vows)).

(6) **The Summoner's Tale.** The Friar in the tale makes the astonishing discovery that Adam was driven out of Paradise on account of his gluttony !

Fro Paradys first, if I shal not lye
 (From Paradise first, if I shall not lie)
 Was man out chaced for his glotonye
 (Was man driven out for his gluttony)

(7) **The Merchant's Tale.** January's preference for a young wife is delightfully witty:

But O thing warne I you, my freends dere
 (But one thing warn I you, my friends dear)
 I wol non old wyf han in no manere
 (I will not old wife have in no manner)
 She shal not passe twenty yeer, certayn
 Old fish and yong flesh wolde I have, ful fayn
 (Old fish and young flesh would I have full feign (most gladly)).

Chaucer's Achievements

The greatest achievement of Chaucer was that he was the first to introduce the note of modernity in English literature. Until his time literature had been medieval. It dealt either with ancient gods and heroes or with abstractions of the allegorical romance. Chaucer made a clean sweep of this unrealistic litter replacing it by real human beings and treating them in a spirit of kindly tolerance and humour, which is the modern way. Another achievement of his was the standardisation of the English language. In his time there were four dialects spoken in England: Northern, Southern, East Midland and West Midland. Of these the East Midland dialect, because it was spoken in and around London and in the University towns of Oxford and Cambridge, tended to gain supremacy. Chaucer chose this for his writings with the result that it became the most popular of the dialects and in course of time the standard English language, the King's (or Queen's) English. When a great poet like Tulsidas chose the 'Avadhi' dialect of Hindi for his *Ramayana*, he raised it to the status of a national language. Chaucer did the same for the English language when he put the stamp of his approval on the East Midland dialect. This dialect was not rich, but Chaucer enriched it with his free borrowings and adaptations from French. In a sense he almost created the English language as we know it today.

The third achievement of Chaucer was in the sphere of versification. He discarded altogether the Anglo-Saxon alliterative tradition—"the rim, ram, roff", as he calls it—and chose the regular, French metre and end rhyme. He wrote in three principal metres: the heroic couplet, the octosyllabic couplet and the Rhyme Royal stanza. In the heroic couplet, the main metre of the *Canterbury*

Tales, each line has ten syllables and five accents. The heroic couplet together with its later development, the blank verse or unrhymed decasyllabic line, became the most popular metre of later English poetry. The octosyllabic couplet, as its name implies, consists of rhyming lines, each of eight syllables with four accents. This is the metre of the *Romance of the Rose* and the *Book of the Duchess*. The Rhyme Royal stanza contains seven decasyllabic lines rhyming ababbcc. Chaucer used this stanza in the *Parliament of Fowls* and *Troilus*.

Thus we see that by choosing right subject, right language and right metre Chaucer put English literature on the road to modernity. His work is in every sense an introduction to English literature and he well deserves the title of father of English poetry.

How to read Chaucer

We have said that Chaucer is in every sense modern. But this statement, so far as his language is concerned, is subject to certain qualifications. He is not modern in the same sense as Pope or Wordsworth. His language has certain difficulties inseparable from its origins. You will remember that Anglo-Saxon was a highly inflected language like modern German or Sanskrit. Over the years many of these inflections disappeared. The process began with the coming of the Danes and went on during the suppression of the native language after the Norman Conquest. Under the stress of necessity, namely that of facilitating communication between the Norman French conquerors and the masses, many of the troublesome inflections were dropped, so that when the native English language ultimately emerged triumphant about the middle of the fourteenth century it was much simpler. But when Chaucer began to write, it still had old forms of words with inflections clinging to them. It is these words and inflections that are the stumbling blocks to the modern reader of Chaucer.

Let us take the first paragraph of the Prologue:

Whan that Aprille

.....

.....

That ham hath holpen.....seke

We notice the following peculiarities:

- (1) Many words ending in 'e'—Aprille, sote, droughte, shoures, Marche, rote, etc.
- (2) Different spellings—shoures (showers), sote (sweet), rote (root), swich (such), licour (liquor), flour (flower), strondes (strands), seke (seek), seke (sick) in the last line, etc.
- (3) Inflected plural verbs—maken (make), slepen (sleep), longen (long), seken (seek).
- (4) Past participles with strange inflections—Y-ronne (run), holpen (helped).

- (5) Minor peculiarities—'hem' for 'them', 'hir' for 'their'
 (6) Foreign or foreign looking words—'Corages', 'ferne', 'halwes', 'couthe'.

Of these the most important are the words ending in 'e', for on their proper pronunciation depends the rhythm of Chaucer's lines. This final 'e' is always sounded if it occurs at the end of a line. If it occurs at the end of a word elsewhere, it is always sounded except when it is immediately followed by another vowel or 'h'. The spellings and inflections present little difficulty and you get used to them. The foreign looking words, however, are foreign to the modern reader, for they are either Anglo-Saxon or French. But even these are really not so difficult as they appear. 'Corages' which suggests courage or courages is simply 'hearts', from the French 'Coer' meaning heart. The connection between courage and heart is obvious. 'Ferne' is Anglo-Saxon for 'far off', 'halwes' suggesting hallow, hallowed or holy is 'saints' from Anglo-Saxon *halga* holy. 'Couth' is Anglo-Saxon for 'Known'. We are familiar with 'uncouth' uncivilised, clumsy.

Thus we see that differences between Chaucer's English and modern English are not so great as they at first sight appear. At any rate the difficulty of language is not such as cannot be overcome with a little practice. The Concise Oxford Dictionary is about all one needs to get at the etymologies. Those who want greater assistance may read Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* side by side with a modernised version such as Nevill Coghill's in Penguin classics.

Chaucer as a Social Historian

On the basis of the living pictures of contemporary society contained in the Prologue, Chaucer has been described as a social historian. This statement, however, is only partially true. Chaucer has painted only the gay side of contemporary life turning a blind eye to its seamy side. No doubt he has pointed out the corruption in the Church in his satirical pictures of the fat friar, the hunting monk, the rascally Summoner and the greedy Pardoner, but in general he leaves the burning social and religious questions studiously alone. He says nothing about the widespread misery and devastation brought about by the Black death; the poverty and discontent of the masses, the Statute of Labourers, the high taxation, the extravagance and general misrule of Richard II; or the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and its cruel suppression. For all Chaucer cared these things had never been. The fact is that Chaucer was a court poet and not a poet of the people as Langland was. He wrote to amuse the court and the nobility, and being himself an easy going man who loved the good things of life did not bother to remind himself or others about the unpleasant aspects of life around him. If Gower, also a court poet, denounced the social evils that had brought about the Peasant's Revolt, it was because his own vested interests as a landlord were threatened by the revolt. Lang-

land was pauper priest with a missionary zeal. Hence his detailed descriptions and denunciations of social and religious evils of the time. Chaucer, on the other hand, was a realist to the core without any passion for reform. Being a keen observer he could not have failed to see the dark shadows in the life around him, but being at the same time a frank lover of life he turned his gaze away from them. Thus his social picture is one-sided and incomplete and his claim to being a social historian limited. In order to get a complete picture of the latter half of the fourteenth century Chaucer's picture has to be supplemented by facets of life given by Langland and Gower.

PROSE OF THE AGE OF CHAUCER

Besides the two prose tales—the tale of Melibee and the Parson's tale—Chaucer wrote a *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, an astronomical instrument, which he dedicated to his little son Lewis and a translation of Boethius. Chaucer's prose is not so artistic as his verse and is unimportant. Wycliff's Bible, the first vernacular translation of the scripture in Europe, made the holy book accessible to the common man and was the first step on the road to the Reformation. Its simple and forceful English demonstrated the potentialities of the vernacular in fields which were generally reserved for Latin. But the great prose work of this period was a book called *Sir John Maundeville's Travels*. It is now generally believed that no such person as Sir John Maundeville ever existed, that the book is a translation from French, and that it is a compilation of fabulous tales from Pliny, Marco Polo and other purveyors of the marvellous. We are familiar with the character of "travellers' tales", and the book answers to the description to perfection. Most of the stories are purely mythical but nevertheless entertaining. We are told of birds that could carry off elephants in their talons, of weeping crocodiles, of a phoenix, of a valley full of devils jumping like grass-hoppers, and of a people who had only one leg but so big that it served them as an umbrella in the rainy season! The book is also remarkable for its literary style—simple, natural, and fluent. It was the most delightful book in English prose produced so far.

BOOK THREE

BETWEEN CHAUCER AND SPENSER

CHAPTER 6

FIFTEENTH CENTURY: POETRY

Fifteenth Century a barren period, specially in poetry—Possible causes of this—The English Chaucerians: Hoccleve and Lydgate—Skelton—Scottish Language: Old Scots and Middle Scots—Scottish literature: Barbour, Blind Harry—The Scottish Chaucerians: James I, Henryson, Dunbar, Douglas—Ballads.

The period of 150 years after Chaucer's death is comparatively a blank, specially in poetry. In other departments the period was less unproductive. In prose it produced one great book—Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, it witnessed the establishment of the drama, and it was in this period that the old beautiful English folk songs or ballads were written.

Several explanations have been given to account for the dearth of good poetry in the fifteenth century. It is said that conditions were unfavourable to poetry and the arts. The Wars of the Roses had killed off the flower of English nobility and there were no patrons. This reason is not very convincing, for we know that the finest work of the fourteenth century—that of Chaucer, Langland and Gower—was produced during the troubled reign of Richard II. It is true that peace and prosperity are conducive to the growth of the arts, but it is equally true that real genius has a way of breaking out even in the most unpropitious circumstances. Another theory blames the absence of first rate poetry in the fifteenth century on the transitional state of the English language. Great changes in grammar and pronunciation were taking place, changes which led over the centuries to modern English. The final 'e' which was an integral part of many words in Chaucer, and being fully pro-

nounced counted as a syllable, was dropped in the fifteenth century. The result was that the music of Chaucer's verse was not appreciated. Possibly his decasyllabic lines were read as octosyllabic, and additional and therefore inconvenient syllable being slurred over hastily. However that may be, his followers imitated him without understanding the technique of his versification. He was regarded as irregular and crude. This misunderstanding led to their taking whatever licence they pleased with their own versification; the verses of his immediate followers, Hoccleve and Lydgate, are little more than doggrel. Chaucer continued to be misunderstood, at least in theory, for nearly four hundred years, and it was only in 1775 that Thomas Tyrwhitt hit upon his secret. In actual practice, however, the secret of Chaucer's rhythm was restored to English verse in the middle of the sixteenth century by Wyatt and Surrey who sought inspiration from Italy as Chaucer before them had sought it from France. This explanation is sounder and more in accord with facts. But perhaps the simplest explanation is that no great poet was born in England during the fifteenth century. The wind of genius bloweth when and where it listeth.

ENGLISH POETRY IN THE 15TH CENTURY

English Chaucerians

Of the English poets of the post-Chaucerian period, only three deserve notice: Hoccleve, Lydgate and Skelton. Though Hoccleve and Lydgate professed to be disciples of Chaucer, both are hopelessly dull. Hoccleve is remembered because the only portrait we have of Chaucer is by him. Lydgate is remembered for the two lines which have become a popular quotation:

Be the day weary, be the day long,
At length it draweth to evensong. (modernised)

The third, John Skelton, cannot be so summarily dismissed, if only because of the interest shown in him by modern poets. If eccentricity is originality, Skelton was certainly original, owing little or nothing to Chaucer or anybody else. His own description of his verse is revealing:

Though my rime be ragged,
Tatter'd and jagged,
Rudely raine beaten,
Rusty and moth-eaten;
If ye take wel therewith
It hath in it some pith.

Because of his 'ragged' and 'jagged' verses Pope called him 'beastly Skelton', and yet it is the roughness of his doggrel-like verses (called Skeltonics) matched by the roughness of his temper that seems to have attracted the moderns. His strong point is satire of the personal kind, coarse and abusive. The most interesting of his satires are *Colin Clout* and *Why come ye not to Court?*

In the first he lashes out at the clergy, in the second at Cardinal Wolsey, the Chief Minister of Henry VIII. Though his characteristic vein was satirical his range was wide and he was capable of tenderness and pathos, as in his *Book of Philip Sparrow*, a girl's lament over the death of her pet sparrow.

Skelton was tutor to the future King Henry VIII, a rector and a learned classical scholar, but he preferred clowning in his poems. He is hard to classify. All that can be said about him is that his poetry reflects the spirit of the dying Middle ages rather than that of the Renaissance.

Scottish Poetry. It is with pleasure that the student turns from the dullness of the English poetry of the 15th century to the poetry of Scotland. It would be well, however, first to take a bird's eye view of the Scottish literature generally. The attempts of the English kings Edward I and Edward II to subdue Scotland at the end of the 13th and in the beginning of the 14th centuries united the warring Scottish clans into a nation. The national feeling thus born led, under the early Stuart Kings in the fifteenth century, to the growth of a vigorous national culture. Broadly speaking two languages were spoken in Scotland: Scots spoken in the Highlands and Gaelic in the Western and Northern Scotland. We are not concerned with the Scottish Gaelic, which like the Welsh or Irish Gaelic belongs to the Celtic world. The Scots with which alone we are concerned had two phases—old Scots and Middle Scots. Old Scots was hardly distinguishable from English spoken in Northern England. It was merely a form of English used in Scotland. By the 15th century old Scots had developed into what we call Middle Scots. This is a sort of hybrid or made-up language used for literary purpose only, for it at no time corresponded to the spoken Scottish language. This language continued to be written until the union of the two crowns in 1603 killed it as the Norman conquest had killed the Anglo-Saxon. After 1603 the Scottish writers wrote in English and a native Scottish literature virtually came to attend, though an attempt to revive it was made by some writers, notably Robert Burns in the 18th century by using the vocabulary of spoken Scots.

Though English poets failed to understand him, the Scottish poets proved apt pupils of Chaucer. His example and influence produced a succession of poets who make the 15th century the most glorious period of Scottish poetry. In range, maturity, and artistry, this truly national poetry has never after been surpassed.

Scottish poetry may be said to begin with John Barbour, an older contemporary of Chaucer. His *Bruce*, a spirited poem in octosyllabics, celebrates the adventures of Robert Bruce, the hero of the Scottish War of Independence. His lines on freedom have become famous.

A! fredome is a noble thing !
Fredome mays man to have liking;

Fredome all solace to man gives.
 He lives at ease that freely lives. (modernised)

The minstrel Henry or Blind Harry who flourished in the latter part of the 15th century was a worthy successor to Barbour. His *Wallace* a long and violently patriotic poem in decasyllabic couplets recounts the brave exploits of the earlier national hero. Neither of these poems is strictly historical, but *Wallace* is almost fabulous in its exaggerations, though because of its patriotic and anti-English appeal it has had enormous vogue among the Scots. The poems are not very musical either; in fact their principal recommendation is their simplicity and patriotic vigour.

SCOTTISH CHAUCERIANS

The poets who were really influenced by Chaucer and who on that account are called Scottish Chaucerians are King James I, Henryson, Dunbar and Gawain Douglas.

James I (1396-1436) the first in point of time wrote the *King's Quair* (King's Book) in the seven lined stanza of Chaucer, which has since come to be called the rhyme-royal. While still a boy he was captured by the English and remained a prisoner in England for 19 years. He fell in love with Lady Jane Beaufort, Henry IV's niece, whom he married. The *King's Quair* which gives a touching and graceful account of this love affair shows marked influence of Chaucer. The description of the King's falling in love at the first sight is reminiscent of the episode in the Knight's tale where the two captive Knights see Emily in the garden through the prison window. The royal author acknowledges his debt to Gower and Chaucer his 'masters dear' and shows himself a correct and accomplished versifier.

Robert Henryson who comes after James but whose dates are uncertain was a school-master. He is a much greater poet than James; he is indeed the first major poet of Scotland. He is independent and original even in his imitation of Chaucer and has great power and remarkable variety. His works consist of two serious poems of some length, the *Testament of Cresside* and *Orpheus and Eurydice*, a collection of *Fables* from Aesop, and about a dozen other minor poems the chief of which is the pastoral ballad, *Robene and Makyne* which was included in Percy's *Reliques*. The *Orpheus and Eurydice* is a poem of average quality which tells the classical legends of the musician Orpheus going to Hades to bring back his wife Eurydice. The *Testament of Cresside* is Henryson's greatest poem in the serious kind. It is a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus* written in the same rhyme-royal stanza. His moral sense was shocked at the idea of the faithful Troilus killed and the faithless Cresside living happily. So he gave the story an ending which he thought was more natural and probable. First, Troilus is not dead. Second, Diomedes tires of Cressida and deserts her as she has deserted Troilus. She thereupon takes to the streets and becomes a common

prostitute. Her horrible punishment comes when she is afflicted with leprosy. So, equipped with a begging bowl and clappers she joins the band of lepers. One day Troilus passes her way and gives her alms, their eyes met, but neither recognised the other. Later when Cresside is told who he was, she faints and dies. Before dying, however, she makes the testament by which she leaves her body to the worms, her begging bowl and clapper to the lepers, and her ring to Troilus. On receiving the ring which he recognises as his own and coming to know of her story Troilus grieves and raises a marble monument over her grave. The story is told with great tragic power, and though the punishment Henryson gives to Cresside is terrible, it is interpenetrated with tenderness and pathos. Mark the skill with which the lovers' meeting by the wayside is described.

Than upon him scho kest up baith hir Ene (eyes),
And with ane blenk (look) it come into his thocht
That he sumtime hir face befor had sene.
But scho was insic pleye (plight) he knew hir nocht,
Yit than hir luik into his mynd it brocht
The sweit visage and amorous blenking
Of fair Cresseid sumtyme his awin darling.

The *Fables* show the poet in a lighter mood and are characterised by lively touches of humour and realism. Henryson is the most characteristically Scottish of all the group in his humour as well as in his realistic description of nature which are true to the Scottish soil and not merely conventional.

Robene and Makyne is the most popular of Henryson's poems and is second only to the *Testament*. It is a pastoral ballad in which at first the usual order of man pursuing woman is reversed. Makyne, the shepherdess, woos Robin, the shepherd, but in vain. Soon, however, the tables are turned and Robin solicits her love. It is now her turn to reject the suit. She retaliates by reminding him of the old proverb—

The man that will nocht when he may
Shall hauf nocht when he wald;

and goes home merrily and heart-whole—a classic example of tit for tat in love. It is a delightful idyll.

William Dunbar (1460-1530) ranks first in this group and has generally been acclaimed as the greatest poet of Scotland second only to Burns. After taking his M.A. degree from the University of St. Andrews he became a Franciscan friar, but was later unfrocked. He was attached to the Court of King James IV who employed him on several diplomatic missions including one to England to negotiate the King's marriage to Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII. He was a court poet and a sort of laureate of Scotland. He was prolific as a poet and about a hundred poems of his are extant. They are most of them short but brilliant, displaying an astonishing diversity of subject and matter. The more noteworthy are the *Thistle and the Rose*, the *Golden Targe*, the *Two Married Women and a Widow*, the *Friars of Berwick*, the *Flyting of*

Dunbar and Kennedy, the Dance of Seven Deadly Sins and the Lament for the Makers.

The *Thistle and the Rose* is an allegory in rhyme-royal celebrating the marriage of James (the Thistle) with Margaret (the Rose). The *Golden Targe* in nine-lined stanzas is an allegory of love. The poet in a dream visits the court of Venus where he is wounded by the arrows of Beauty in spite of Reason's defending him with a golden targe or shield. Neither of these allegories is consistent. They are rather playful exercises of the poet's rhetoric. The language is heavily ornamented, almost oriental in its splendour, and the swing of metre charms the ears.

The *Two Married Women and a Widow* inspired by the wife of Bath's tale is a scolding satire on women. The remarks of these three women on their husbands and on matrimony would make even the wife of Bath blush. The *Friars of Berwick*, also reminiscent of Chaucer, is a scandalous tale of intrigue involving a high ranking friar and a farmer's wife. In the *Flyting* Dunbar and Kennedy (a contemporary poet) hurl abuses at each other. Such flytings or scolding matches were common among literary Scots upto the 18th century. The *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins* in twelve-line stanzas of spirited verse describes a procession of the sins personified before Satan (called Mahoun or Mohammed) in hell. It is a stinging satire on wickedness, but in a comic tone without any aim at reform or edification. It is much better known than any of the poems referred to above. But the best of Dunbar's poems is the *Lament for the Makers* (Makers=Poets). It is an elegy on the dead poets, most of them Scotsmen, in which he bewails the shortness of life and the transitoriness of all earthly things. This is perhaps the only poem in which Dunbar is serious, soft and subdued.

Though Dunbar is so versatile and appears in many roles—allegorist, moralist, trifle, satirist and buffoon—it is by his satiric and humorous poems that he establishes his claim to be regarded as the greatest Scottish poet next only to Burns. His greatest distinction, however, lies in his metrical craftsmanship. He is a virtuoso of rhythm and style. His lack of tenderness repels many readers; lovers of Burns particularly cannot take very kindly to Dunbar. The slogan "Back to Dunbar" raised by some modern Scottish poets in a reaction against the sentimental Burns is a passing phase. Though a Chaucerian, he had nothing of Chaucer's wide humanity and genial humour. Quite apart from this, the language difficulty is a greater barrier, not easily crossed even by Scotsmen, to say nothing of foreigners. The following stanzas from the *Lament* are easy enough and will serve to illustrate Dunbar's quality.

That strong unmercifull tyrand (tyrant)
Takis on the moderis breist sowkand (mother's breast sucking)
The bab full of benignite, (babe, innocence)
Timor mortis conturbat me

He takis the campioun in the stour, (champion, fight)
 The capitane closit in the tour,
 The lady in bour full of bewte,
Timor mortis conturbat me.
 His spairis no lord for his pissance (puissance)
 Na clerk for his intelligence;
 His awful strak' may no man fle (stroke)
Timor mortis conturbat me.

The language difficulty is even greater in the case of Gawain Douglas (1475-1522) the last of this group. He uses Scots, ancient and modern, with Latin and English words thrown in for want of equivalents in his own tongue, and it is very hard to follow him without constant reference to a glossary. Few, however, would take this trouble, as Douglas is perhaps the least important poet of this group.

He was high-born, well educated and a Bishop. After the disaster of Flodden (1513) he was involved in political intrigues and had to flee the country. He escaped to London where he died at the early age of 48. His works consist of two original poems, the *Palace of Honour* and *King Hart* and of a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The *Palace of Honour* reminiscent of Chaucer's *House of Fame* is an allegory in nine-line stanzas, and has little to recommend itself besides the aureate rhetoric so common in all these Scottish poets. *King Heart* or *Hart* is a childish allegory of life in octaves. Heart, the King living in his castle (the body) and surrounded by five servants (the senses) is trapped by Dame Pleasance (Pleasure) from whom he is freed by Age only to die from Decrepitude. Douglas's fame, however, rests on his translation of the *Aeneid*. His was the first translation of this classic to appear in any British language and as such has some historical importance as anticipating the humanism of the Renaissance. While the experts wrangle about the merits of the translation, they are all agreed about the excellence of the prologues which the translator has added to the various books of the *Aeneid*. In these prologues, entirely his own, Douglas wrote as fancy dictated, of himself, of his country, of the seasons. The Prologues describing the seasons are the most interesting. His pictures of Winter, Spring and Summer given respectively in Prologues to books 7, 12, and 13 have a luxuriance of detail—colours, scents and sounds of the Scottish landscape—uncommon in the Middle Ages. The metre used is of various kinds: rhyme-royal, octave, nine-line stanza, the couplet and several others. The prologues are not free from rhetoric, but what is worth remembering is that Douglas has in a very marked degree that genuine love of nature which has always distinguished the Scottish poets. He very naturally reminds one of Thomson, his greater countryman of the 18th century.

Ballads

Though the fifteenth century is poor in poetry, it is rich in what has been called 'unofficial' poetry—the ballads. The origin and the date of ballads have been furiously debated, but it is fairly certain

that the ballads are the shortened versions of all romances, not only in England but throughout Europe, and that the English ballads—or the great majority of them—were produced in the fifteenth century. The Robin Hood ballads are certainly earlier. They are mentioned in *Piers Plowman*, but judging from the language and tone they are not earlier than the fourteenth century. Quite a large number date from the 16th and 17th centuries, but they are in the nature of imitation, antiques, products of conscious literary art and sophistication. The genuine ballad has a certain primitive quality both in feeling and in treatment which constitutes its chief charm and which cannot be reproduced successfully in more modern times. The word ballad (of. ballet) is connected with dancing, and it is possible that the original ballads were sung or recited to the accompaniment of community dances. Be that as it may, the ballads have the musical quality of song, however rough their rhythm may appear in print. They are just short folk tales in verse. Their simplicity, naturalness, and sincerity, together with their fresh out-door atmosphere, give them an appeal which is universal and not merely local or popular.

A ballad is thus a short traditional and popular story in verse of unknown authorship. As ballads were transmitted orally, very few have come down to us in their original form. Some have scores of variants, which shows that in the course of centuries they have passed through a process of adaptation, alteration and modification.

The special ballad metre is a stanza of four lines, the second and fourth rhyming together. The first and third lines have four and the second and fourth lines have three iambic feet.

The first collection of ballads was made by Bishop Thomas Percy in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* published in 1765. This was followed by Sir Walter Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*. Towards the end of the 19th century Prof Child of Harvard published his *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, which is the largest collection.

The student is advised to read at least the following ballads: *Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar*, *Chevy Chase*, *Nut-brown Maid*, and *Sir Patrick Spens*.

Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar. This is one of the most amusing of the ballads centring round this famous outlaw. There is a good deal of horse-play between the two at first. Then they fight and Robin Hood being worsted blows three blasts on his horn, at which fifty of his archers appear. The Curtal (short-frocked) Friar then putting his fist to his mouth emits three hoots at which fifty curtal (docked) blood hounds appear. Two of the dogs tearing off Robin Hood's cloak, a battle royal is joined between the two groups. When ten of his dogs are killed the Friar accepts defeat and yields to Robin Hood.

Chevy Chase. (Chase or hunting in the Cheviots). This is the most famous of the ballads. It has been called 'a little epic'

and describes in a truly martial style the gallant fight between two border lords, Percy of Northumberland and Douglas of Scotland. The incident is historical or at least semi-historical, which took place early in the 15th century. Percy defies Douglas by hunting in the enemy territory, the Cheviot hills. The inevitable fight takes place and Douglas is slain. The scene of Percy grieving over the dead body of his erstwhile enemy and admiring his worth has a touch of pathos and chivalry which is strangely moving. Sir Philip Sidney in his *Apology for Poetry* paid this ballad a handsome tribute when he said: 'I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, that I found not my heart more moved than with a trumpet.' And yet, as he goes on to say, its style is so crude and unadorned. Indeed it was the roughness of its metre and style coupled with genuine feeling that appealed so much to the Romantics.

The Nut-brown Maid shows greater metrical skill and in truth and tenderness of feeling is the very essence of poetry. The maid, a baron's daughter, is tested like Griselda for constancy in love. Her lover who, she thinks, is an ordinary squire comes to bid her farewell. He has killed a man, he says, and must flee. The girl doesn't care, and even when he says he has another mistress she remains unshaken in her resolve to follow him. Having passed the test, she learns that the squire is really an earl's son who will make her a Countess.

Sir Patrick Spens. This ballad tells the story of the ill-fated expedition sent out by the King of Scotland to bring home the Maid of Norway. On the return voyage the ship under the command of Sir Patrick Spens, a famous sailor, is wrecked in a storm and all on board are lost.

The ballad metre is illustrated in the following stanzas:

Robin Hood set his horn to his mouth,
He blew but blasts three;
Half a hundred Yeomen, with bows bent,
Came raking over the lee.

(*Robin Hood and Curtal Friar*)

The Perse owt off Northembarlande
An avowe to God made he
That he would hunt in the mountayns
Off Chyviat within days three.

(*Chevy Chase*)

Our King has written a braid letter,
And seal'd it with his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the strand.

(*Sir Patrick Spens*)

CHAPTER 7

FIFTEENTH CENTURY: PROSE

✓ Malory's *Morte d' Arthur* — Caxton — *Paston Letters* — Berners — The appearance of the Drama.

English Prose in the Fifteenth Century

The Prose of the fifteenth century was still in a preparatory stage and offers little that has literary or artistic interest beyond the work of two authors—Malory and Berners. It was a period of preparation during which English prose was exercised by being put to various uses: romance, history, law, politics and theological controversy. The learned, for the most part, wrote in Latin, the international language which was still the favourite. The native language was in a fluid state, formless and indefinite in its grammar and vocabulary. It was changing so rapidly that Caxton, the first English printer, who set up his printing press in 1476, found the language in his old age very different from what it had been in his childhood. He was not certain what kind of language would be generally understood or would please the public. In poetry Chaucer had provided a model, but no great writer had provided such a model for prose. Caxton loved poetry and printed Chaucer's works as well as those of Lydgate and Gower. But he was fascinated by French prose and wanted to achieve the same clarity and grace in English. Besides, he was a businessman who wanted to make a living, and in the fast increasing educated class there were more readers of prose than of poetry. Though not a great scholar, he was a lover of books and being enterprising he himself undertook the work of providing his reading matter, mostly by translating French romances. Caxton thus is an important figure in the history of English prose, for he stimulated and in part satisfied the appetite of the new generation of readers for prose stories. It was he who printed Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* destined to become the greatest book of the fifteenth century.

Of other writers the briefest mention is all that is possible in this history. Nobody today would waste his time over Pecock's *Repressor of Overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, a defence of orthodoxy against the attacks of Wycliff and his followers. Sir John

Fortesque's treatise on the *Governance of England* may interest constitutional pundits or British patriots. But there is one passage in it which has become famous for its chauvinism. Contrasting the fearless independence of the English with the cowardly slavishness of the French, Sir John extols even English highwaymen. Robbery, he argues, implies courage, but the French are too cowardly even to rob or steal! The spelling of this Chief Justice of England is the most grotesque in this age of fanciful spelling.

It is customary to include in the prose of this period the *Paston Letters*. This is a collection of letters exchanged between members of a middle-class family over the period 1422-1509. They are ordinary letters concerned with the business of living, buying and managing property, lawsuits and the like. There is nothing literary about them and they cannot be classed as literature. So we come to Malory and Berners.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* was printed in 1485 by Caxton who says that the manuscript was given him by Sir Thomas Malory, Knight. He is said to have been a Lancastrian and a member of Parliament. He died in 1471. His book, a translation from a large number of French sources, is the largest single collection of Arthurian legends in English.

It is easy enough for criticism to pick holes in this book; to say, for example, that it is a loose compilation which has no unity of theme or plot. But considering the vast and scattered material that Malory had to deal with, one cannot but admire the skill and discrimination with which he reduced such a heterogeneous mass to a coherent sequence, however imperfect. As regards unity, the book has a higher unity than that of thought or plot, namely, the unity of tone and atmosphere. The atmosphere of the fairy tale, of the magical and the marvellous, and of a twilight melancholy is all-pervasive. What is more, the book sums up in itself all the virtues and vices of the age of chivalry, real or fancied. "Herein may be seen", in the words of Caxton's preface, "noble chyvalrye, curtosye, humanyte, friendlynesse, hardynesse, love, frendshyp, cowardyse, murdre, hate, vertue and synne. Doo after the good and leve the evyl and it shal brynge you to good fame and renommee."

Malory writes in a style of childlike simplicity which sometimes becomes childish. We get a succession of sentences beginning with Then, And then, And so then. The book is full of castles, tournaments, heroic battles and single combats, which is apt to become tiresome to the modern reader. But the author is intent on telling his story without a trace of self-consciousness, elaboration or finesse. The result is a poetic prose well suited to its purpose, and this is the highest merit of style. The charm of the book has never been denied, though Roger Ascham condemned it on the ground of morals; for the loves of Launcelot and Guinevere are sinful, and yet they are held up as ideal lovers. This puritanical criticism is

based on misunderstanding. True to the tradition of old romances Malory portrays courtly or chivalric morality, not religious morality. Such contradictions are part of the unreal world of chivalry. All in all, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* is the greatest book in prose or verse between Chaucer and Spenser. Besides its intrinsic worth, it is the one great storehouse of those myths and legends of King Arthur which have had such fascination for English poets, specially Tennyson, whose *Idylls of the King* are almost entirely based on it. The following passage tells how the body of the Lady of Shalott arrived in a boat before King Arthur.

How the corps of the Mayde of Astolat arryved before King Arthur: Soo by fortune (chance) kynge Arthur and the quene Guenevere were spekyng together at a wydowe, and soo as they looked in to Temse (Thames) they aspyed this black barget, and hadde marvellé what it mente. Thenne the kynge called sire Kay & shewed hit hym. 'Sir,' said sir Kay, 'were you wel there is some newe tydynges'. 'Goo thyder', sayd the kynge to sir Kay, 'and take with yow sire Brandyles and Agravayne and bryng me redy word what is there'. Thenne those four knyghtes departed and came to the barget and wente in, and there they fond (found) the fayrest corps lyenge in a ryche bedde and a poure man sitting in the bargets ende, and no word wold he speke. Soo these four knyghtes returned unto the kynge ageyne and told hym what they fond. 'That fayr corps wylle I see', sayd the kynge. And soo thenne the kynge took the quene by the hand & went thydder. Thenne the kynge made the barget to be holden fast, and thenne the kynge and the quene entred with certayn knyghtes wyth them, and there he sawe the fayrest woman lye in a ryche bedde, covered unto her myddel with many ryche clothes, and alle was of clothe of gold, and she lay as though she had smyled. Thenne the quene aspyed a letter in her ryght hand and told it to the kynge. Thenne the kynge took it and sayd, 'Now am I sure this letter wille telle what she was, and why she is come hydder.' Soo thenne the kynge and the quene wente oute of the barget, and so commaunded a certayne wayte (watch) upon the barget. And soo whan the kynge was come within his chamber he called many knyghtes aboute hym, and saide that he wold wete (know) openly what was wryten within that letter. Thenne the kynge brake it, and made a clerke to rede hit, and this was the entente (purport) of the letter: 'Most noble knyghte sir Launcelot, now hath dethe made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover that men called the fayre mayden of Astolat. Therefor unto alle ladyes I make my mone. Yet praye for my soule and bery me atte (at the) leest, and offre ye my masse peny. This is my last request. And a ciene mayden I dyed, I take God to wytnes. Pray for my soule, sir Launcelot, as thou art pierles (peerless)'. This was alle the substance in the letter, and whan it was redde the kynge, the quene, and alle the knyghtes wepte for pyte of the doleful complayntes.

(Book xviii. Chap. 20)

Berners (1467-1533). The second great writer of this century is Lord Berners who was for sometime Lord Chancellor and then Governor of Calais. The most notable of his many translations from French are *Froissart's Chronicles* and *Huon of Bordeaux*. Not less notable is his *Golden Book of Marcus Anrelius*, a translation from the Spanish of Guevara. *Froissart's Chronicles* became a source-book as well as a model for future historians like Hall and Holinshed. Froissart was a French historian and his book deals with the affairs of France, Flanders, England, Spain and Portugal during the fourteenth century. *Huon of Bordeaux* is a French romance of the 13th century and is important as the first book to introduce Oberon, the fairy king. With his help Huon achieved

apparently impossible adventures in the reign of Charlemagne. His *Golden Bock of Marcus Aurelius* was the first work of highly ornate prose which soon became fashionable and ultimately led to Euphuism. With him we are at the threshold of Humanism and he may be regarded as a link between the two ages.

The Drama

It now remains to consider the drama which also made its appearance as a distinct and well-established form of English literature in the fifteenth century. The consideration of this subject, however, must be reserved for a later chapter.

CHAPTER 8

THE RENAISSANCE AND THE REFORMATION

Sovereigns—Henry VII 1485-1509, Henry VIII 1509-1547, Edward VI 1547-1553, Mary 1553-1558, Elizabeth 1558-1603.

The meaning of Renaissance—Its beginning in Italy with Petrarch and Boccaccio in the 14th Century—The discovery of classical Latin literature of Virgil, Ovid, and Cicero—The capture of Constantinople, the last stronghold of Greek culture by the Turks, and the flight of Greek scholars Westward—Their welcome in Italy and the spread of 'humanism'—Assisted by the invention of printing in Germany, and later by the discovery of America—Reformation: Its beginning in Germany with Martin Luther's revolt against the Pope—The split in the Christian Church into Protestant and Catholic—Reformation in England: Henry VIII's divorce of Anne Boleyn and his break with the Pope led to his becoming independent head of the English Church—Reformation furthered under Edward VI, checked under 'bloody' Mary, and restored under Elizabeth—Renaissance late in England—Its advance under Henry VIII and climax under Elizabeth.

The end of the fifteenth century marks the end of the Middle Ages. We now enter upon a new era—that of the *Renaissance*. Before considering the literature of Renaissance England, we must first try to understand the new tendencies in the life and thought of the English people that the Renaissance brought in.

THE RENAISSANCE

The word Renaissance means rebirth (*Re*: again, *naissance*: birth). Who was reborn? It was the human spirit that was reborn or awakened after the long slumber of the Middle Ages. This rebirth or awakening was brought about by a revival of interest in the culture and civilisation of ancient Greece and Rome. The study of classical Greek and Roman art and literature came to be called Humanism and its devotees Humanists. Humanism simply means the religion of humanity or devotion to human or secular interests, as opposed to divinity. As divinity or dogmatic religion had been the chief concern in the Middle Ages, the new learning of humanism brought about a revolutionary change in the life and outlook of the people in that it was a change of emphasis from the religious to

the secular. From now on, people began to value life for its own sake and not merely as a preparation ground for that in the next world. This secular spirit marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of a new epoch—the age of Renaissance.

Italy was the home of the Renaissance. Dante (1265-1321) is the last representative of the Middle Ages. In his *Divine Comedy* he roams through heaven and hell and purgatory. The poet who came after him, Petrarch (1304-74) changed all that. He turned away from such gloomy subjects and wrote of more agreeable things of love, of nature, and of the glories of ancient Rome. The people were delighted and they crowned him with the laurel wreath of the poet laureate. He was soon joined by his young friend Boccaccio (1313-75) who delighted his countrymen with rollicking stories of love and laughter and poems of romance and passion.

Both these Italians were immensely interested in the past achievements of their country, the relics of ancient buildings, the beautiful statues and vases dug up here and there, the old and forgotten manuscripts of Virgil, Ovid or Cicero fished out from some musty library. These reminded them of the mighty Roman Empire that had ruled the world a thousand years. So Petrarch and Boccaccio were among the earliest of the humanists and their work marks the dawn of the Renaissance. The Italians were thrilled with the newly discovered beauties of ancient Rome. Soon the craze spread to western Europe. The scholar who studied the Roman antiquities, art and literature became a highly respected figure.

In the midst of this intellectual revolution, an event took place which gave a further fillip to the new scholarship. The Turks who were firmly established in Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt and had extended their conquests to the eastern Mediterranean, Greece and the Balkans, even to the gates of Vienna, were now pressing hard on Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine or the eastern half of the original Roman Empire. In 1453, this last stronghold of Greek culture fell to the Turks. Long before this the Greek scholars alarmed by the Turkish pressure had been fleeing West along with their precious libraries. They had found welcome in Italy, particularly in Florence under the patronage of the great family of Medici who ruled there. With the fall of Constantinople, the flow of Greek scholars became a steady stream. The Italians who had only heard of the great names of Homer, of Plato and Aristotle, and were anxious to know them at first hand, now satisfied their curiosity at the feet of the refugee scholars. Their joy knew no bounds. To the treasure of ancient Rome was added the new and richer treasure of ancient Greece that had been the nurse of ancient Rome. The universities were alarmed, for the students flocked round the Greek scholars, the humanists, leaving their own teachers, the schoolmen, who were still teaching the antiquated scholastic philosophy, an abstruse mixture of the Bible and Aristotle's logic filtered through Arabic scholars. The schoolmen fought against the new learning in vain. A last stand was made in Florence, the

centre of the renaissance, by the monk Savanarola, who denounced the artistic licence and craze for beauty that had seized the people. As a result of his frenzied eloquence, the people were frightened and promised to repent for their sinful love of beauty and pleasure. They made a bonfire of their books, statues, and paintings, to the great satisfaction of the fanatic. His joy, however, was short-lived; for the people realizing what they had done in a moment of weakness, turned against him. He was dragged through the streets, hanged and burnt. Nobody could save him, not even the Pope, for Popes themselves had turned humanists, filling the Vatican with the most precious treasures of Greek and Roman art. The renaissance was in full tide in Italy at the end of the 15th century and marked the end of the Middle Ages. Excluding the era of classical Latin, the Renaissance is the most glorious period of Italy in art and literature. In literature the most famous productions were: in poetry (1) Ariosto's *Orlande Furioso*, a romantic poem and (2) Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* a romantic epic; in Prose: Castiglione's *The Courtier*, presenting 'the Renaissance ideal of living as a fine art', the *Autobiography* of Benvenuto Cellini, the famous sculptor and lover, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, a book of political philosophy which has given us the word 'Machiavellian' meaning unscrupulous, Bandello's *Tales* and Cinthio's *Hundred Tales* (or *Hecatomithi*). In the sphere of art Italian artists, more particularly Italian painters of Renaissance, remain supreme to this day. The most famous are:

(1) Leonardo da Vinci, painter, sculptor and engineer—the most gifted of all.

(2) Michaelangelo, painter and sculptor, famous, among other things, for his frescoes of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

(3) Raphael, painter, famous specially for the Madonnas.

(4) Andrea del Sarto, painter, celebrated in Browning's poem of that name.

(5) Correggio, painter

(6) Tintoretto, painter, glorified by Ruskin in his *Modern Painters*.

While the fall of Constantinople was the most important event in producing and spreading the spirit of humanism, there were other events and influences which contributed to the new awakening of the Renaissance. About the middle of the 15th century, Johann Gutenberg of Germany invented printing. This led to the multiplication of books which could now be acquired easily and cheaply. There was a general increase in the number of readers and in the thirst for knowledge. And knowledge meant broad-mindedness, freedom from prejudice, individualism and free thinking.

As a climax to this intellectual ferment came the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492. This further widened the people's mental horizon and fired their imagination. Other discoveries followed, which revealed a world of new and unheard-of riches. The vision of a new world with abundant riches to be acquired by

the ambitious filled the people with a spirit of adventure. Adventurers like John Hawkins and Francis Drake who were traders as well as pirates on the high seas brought immense treasure to England in the reign of Elizabeth.

The spirit of inquiry and free thinking fostered by the new learning and the new discoveries led to scientific theories in various fields. Of these the astronomical theories of Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1642), and Kepler (1571-1630) had the effect of changing entirely the medieval conception of the universe and of man's place in it.

THE REFORMATION

The most notable result of the Renaissance in the sphere of religion was the revolution known as the Reformation. The questioning spirit engendered by the Renaissance combined with the people's disgust at the evils of the Church and the clergy, which ultimately led to the repudiation of papal authority and the formation of national states. We have seen how as early as the fourteenth century John Wycliff had attacked the corruption in the Church. Johann Huss in Bohemia (modern Czechoslovakia) who had read Wycliff's writings led a similar movement early in the fifteenth century against the Church in his own country and was condemned and burnt at the stake. In the 16th century Martin Luther (1483-1546) provoked by the infamous sale of Indulgences (or pardons of sins), posted upon the door of the church at Wittenberg a list of 95 theses protesting against papal indulgences and other evils of the church. This was the beginning of the split of the Church between Protestant and Catholic. A great part of Germany became Protestant and repudiated the authority of the Pope. The movement was not confined to Germany only. In Switzerland the reform movement was taken up by a Zurich priest, Zwingli, and later on by a Frenchman, John Calvin. Calvinism, a stricter form of Protestantism soon spread to England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany and Hungary.

This movement received further support from the humanists. The most important of these was Erasmus (1466-1536) a Dutchman of Rotterdam. He travelled over most of Europe and lived for a time in England, being the associate of such English humanists as Colet, More and Grocyn. He lectured at Cambridge for three years early in the 16th century. Almost all Erasmus's works are in Latin, the most important being *Encomium Moriae* or the Praise of Folly, a scathing satire aimed at folly in general, but particularly at the follies of the Church.

Henry VII (1485-1509) crushed the nobles, amassed money and made important marriages. He married his daughter Margaret to King James IV of Scotland and his son Henry to a Spanish princess, Catherine of Aragon. These marriages had far-reaching consequences. Henry VIII tiring of his Spanish wife who had given him

a daughter and no male heir, desired a divorce in order to marry the beautiful Anne Boleyn. The Pope refused to grant the divorce because he could not afford to offend Charles V, King of Spain and Emperor of Germany, who was Catherine's nephew. Henry was a headstrong man and decided to break off with the Pope and get the divorce in his own courts. The Parliament supported him in this move and passed in 1529 the Act of Supremacy making Henry the head of the Church in England. He did not change his faith as the Protestants were doing. On the contrary he burnt at the stake those who held Protestant beliefs. But he was not a Catholic either, for he beheaded those Catholics who denied his headship of the Church. Sir Thomas More, the most learned man of his time and the author of *Utopia*, was beheaded for this very reason.

Henry then proceeded to dissolve the monasteries and shared their vast lands and property with the nobles. The nobles, therefore, supported the Reformation, for they did not want Roman Catholicism to come back for fear of losing monastic lands.

Another important event that helped the Reformation was a fresh translation of the Bible by Miles Coverdale. Copies of the Bible were ordered to be placed in the churches and soon after anyone could possess a Bible. Luther and other reformers had held up the Bible and not the Pope as the final authority in matters of religious beliefs. Bibles becoming common, more and more people read the scripture for themselves and repudiated the Pope and the Roman Catholic doctrines.

Henry left three children: two daughters and a son. Of the daughters, Mary was by his first wife Catherine and Elizabeth by his second, Anne Boleyn, while the son, Edward, was by his third wife Jane Seymour. Edward (1547-53) succeeded to the throne as Edward VI, but as he was only a boy nine years old, the kingdom was looked after by regents. They pushed the Reformation further but in a hasty and bungling way that angered the devout people. There were sporadic rebellions, but these were put down by main force. Edward being a sickly boy died in 1553 and was succeeded by Mary. Mary (1553-1558) like her mother was a Catholic and at least half a Spaniard. She married her cousin, Philip II, king of Spain, and attempted to restore the Roman Catholic religion. The Protestants were burnt at the stake. About three hundred people were thus burnt during her reign. These included Archbishop Cranmer and four bishops. On account of these cruelties, she is known in history as 'bloody Mary'. But she did not succeed. These barbarities only served to confirm the English people in the reformed religion.

With the coming of Elizabeth (1558-1603) to the throne, the Protestant religion was restored. But she was not a fanatic. She did not care what people believed. All she wanted was that they should acknowledge her as head of the national Church and should go about their work and worship peaceably. But the religious troubles

did not come to an end. The extreme Protestants, the Puritans, who did not believe that the Church needed any head, remained and caused a great deal of trouble in the Stuart period.

Like her ancestors, Elizabeth was an absolute ruler. Like her ancestors, too, she wisely sought the cooperation of Parliament in her government of England. Her reign was marked by intense patriotism and pride in English achievements. The profitable exploits of the buccaneers were climaxed by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. England became a great sea-power, the rival of Spain, France, and the Netherlands.

The Renaissance was rather late in reaching England, but it was already far advanced in the reign of Henry VIII. Literature, art, and music flourished under him and continued to advance in spite of the troubles in the reign of Edward VI and Mary, until they reached glorious flowering under Elizabeth. Under her patronage there was a flood of writings of all sorts: prose, poetry and drama. The monumental works of the dramatists with Shakespeare at the top testify to the vigour of the artistic impulse in the Elizabethan period. /

CHAPTER 9

EARLY TUDOR OR PRE-ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

The first fruits of the Renaissance: *Tottel's Miscellany*—Wyatt and Surrey: their sonnets—Surrey's blank verse—Minor poets between Surrey and Spenser: Sackville, Gascoigne, etc—Prose of the Humanists, Ascham and others—The Bible translations.

POETRY

In 1557 appeared the first fruits of the Renaissance in the famous collection of songs and sonnets by Wyatt and Surrey and some others, called after the name of its publishers, *Tottel's Miscellany*. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-42) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-47), the two 'courtly makers' (poets) of the Court of Henry VIII were deeply influenced by the Italian renaissance and it was they who injected fresh life into English poetry by bringing from Italy the passionate love poetry of Petrarch and the verse-form called the sonnet. The Petrarchan sonnet contains fourteen lines divided into two groups of eight (octave) and six (sestet). The octave rhymes *abba, abba*, and the sestet *cde, cde*, or *cde, cde*, or in other variations. Surrey modified the form into three quatrains (fours) with different rhymes *abab, cdcd, efef* and a final couplet *gg*. The form established by Surrey was later adopted by Shakespeare and has come to be called Shakespearean. The sonnet with its highly conventional and strict technique provided to these reformers of English poetry just the discipline they needed and called forth all their craftsmanship. Being pioneers and innovators they were handicapped at first by the still unsettled state of pronunciation, and their first experiments are consequently not free from defective accentuation. But on the whole they succeeded in restoring to English versification the regularity and flexibility which it had lost during the century following Chaucer.)

An important consequence of the introduction of the sonnet was the revival of lyricism or personal poetry which had been almost dead since the thirteenth century and of which even Chaucer had so little. Both Wyatt and Surrey died young; Surrey was barely

thirty when he fell a victim to the terror of the last years of Henry VIII's reign and was executed on a false charge of treason. The poems of both are sweet and graceful; the chief difference between them is that while Wyatt's lyrics are frank and manly in tone with nothing of the timid self-abasement of the conventional lover, Surrey's are elegiac in mood and are marked by his love of nature. Moreover, Surrey, though he stood in the relation of pupil to his master Wyatt, is a more accomplished craftsman. If Wyatt has the credit of introducing the Petrarchan sonnet, Surrey has the no less credit of inventing the English or Shakespearean form. But Surrey's greatest claim to distinction lies in his use, for the first time in English poetry, of blank verse in his translation of the second and fourth books of Virgil's *Aeneid*. This too he borrowed from the Italians. His blank verse is rather stiff because of its tendency to be end-stopped, to complete the sense, that is to say, at the end of each line; but even so it is handled with skill and is not unpleasing. Under the new influence of the classics rhyme had come to be regarded as a barbarity. This, of course, was wrong, but the importance of the new metre cannot be too much emphasised. It was destined to become the metre of the drama and the epic. Between them Wyatt and Surrey opened 'fresh fields and pastures new' to English poetry. Without them as pioneers the Elizabethans could never have taken the long strides they did in the forward march towards the glorious achievements of Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Milton.

The work of these two poets was not followed up immediately by their successors. A whole generation passed before it bore fruit in the work of Spenser. Not that no poetry was written in the interval. On the contrary, *Tottel's Miscellany* was followed by several others like the *Paradise of Dainty Devices*, *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions*, etc; but these contained nothing attractive except their titles. There are only two minor poets of any importance between Surrey and Spenser. Others are mere names - Churchyard, Tusser, Turberville, Googe and the rest. The two exceptions are Sackville and Gascoigne. Quite apart from his poems, Sackville is important for his part in writing the first blank verse tragedy, *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex*, and Gascoigne is remembered for his blank verse satire, the *Steel Glass*. The only important thing to notice about these undistinguished poets is that they did not sink to the doggerel of the fifteenth century.

PROSE

In considering the prose of this period we must remember that, as in poetry, we are dealing with a period of transition from the medieval through the early English Renaissance to its culmination under Queen Elizabeth. The development of the early Renaissance prose is bound up with the work of Humanists—scholars of Greek and Latin who were fired with the zeal to disseminate classical culture, to import the literary ideals of Greek and Latin and generally to adapt English to Latin grammar and syntax.

The greatest prose work of the fifteenth century, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, was medieval in outlook. It looked backwards and not forward, and being unique in its kind could not be followed. Having no models to follow every writer had to strike out a line for himself. The result was a highly idiosyncratic prose not only in this period but throughout the whole of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The century of standard English prose—the eighteenth—was still far away. We should not be surprised, therefore, if we do not come upon any great prose works in this period outside the Bible for which a standard or traditional prose style was perforce created by the circumstances of the Reformation. The period was one of training in which English prose was exercised in many fields—history, politics, education, sermons, religious controversies and above all, translation of the Bible. For the sake of convenience the pioneers who stimulated by Humanism attempted prose writing may be divided into three groups; the Oxford Humanists, the Educationists, and the Translators of the Bible.

The Oxford Humanists—Linacre, Grocyn, Colet, More. The first three who had first-hand and deep knowledge of Greek and Latin helped to put the teaching of Greek on a sound foundation in the University of Oxford. Colet, Dean of St. Paul's, founded the St. Paul's school which became a model for secondary schools based on the teaching of Latin and Greek. It was for this school that Lily wrote the famous Latin grammar which reigned supreme in English schools until very recent times.

Thomas More (1478-1535), the friend of Erasmus and a pupil of the Oxford humanists noticed above, was the only one of this group to produce a work of literature. But his *Utopia* was in Latin and though written in 1516 it was translated into English after his death by Robinson. The book, inspired partly by Plato's *Republic* and partly by current speculations on an ideal commonwealth, testifies to the writer's great ability, deep culture and good nature. Broadly speaking, More visualised in his *Utopia* a kind of socialism not unlike the one our planners are trying to realise in India. The most significant thing, however, is its secular character, for every Utopian is free to profess any religion he likes. It is the work of a dreamer who sought to build an ideal state regardless of the practical application of his ideas. The Greek word 'Utopia' means nowhere and has given us 'Utopian', meaning fantastic, impractical.

It is a pity More wrote *Utopia* in Latin, for as such it does not belong strictly to English literature. His English works consist of his *History of Richard III*, his polemical writings and his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*. The only noteworthy thing about the *History* is the sinister picture of Richard III adopted and popularised by Shakespeare. His polemical writings against Tyndale and the Reformers do him little credit, for they are in flat contradiction of the advanced views he had expressed in his *Utopia*. The

Dialogue, written during his confinement in the Tower awaiting execution, is the best of his English works. Intensely personal, it reveals the nobility, saintliness and charm of his character. Being less formal than the others, its style is homely and colloquial, enlivened with jests and humorous anecdotes. In his formal writings such as his *History*, the sentences are formless and interminably long and More cannot be said to have done much to improve English prose. To counterbalance this More deserves the credit of having originated many homely and expressive words and phrases which are familiar to us in everyday speech. Such (*Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, Vol I, p. 124) are: out of sight, out of mind; he cannot see the wood for the trees; mad as March hare; dead as a door-nail; harping on the right string; perceiving chalk from cheese; our contemptuous reference to persons and things as not worth a fig, a straw, a rush, a button, etc. we owe to More.

The Educationists : Elyot, Cheke, Wilson, Ascham. With the exception of Elyot, all belonged to St. John's College, Cambridge. Unlike More, this group wrote in English from the patriotic motive of improving its powers of expression. Thomas Elyot's *Governor*, a treatise of moral and philosophical education for the governing class, and Sir John Cheke's *Heart of Sediton* are just competent prose. Sir Thomas Wilson in his *Art of Rhetoric* pleads for purity and simplicity of English, setting his face against 'ink horn terms', 'outlandish' expressions and archaisms. Roger Ascham, the most famous of them all, was a tutor to Elizabeth. His *Toxophilus* attempts to revive the old national sport of archery for the physical training of youth. He condemns bookworms who would not vary their studies with physical recreation. 'But I say it therefore because I know, as little study getteth little learning or none at all, so the most study getteth not yet most learning of all.' In the more famous, *Schoolmaster*, he discusses educational problems and specially the best method of teaching Latin. The method he advocates is that of translation and retranslation—the method he himself followed. Translate a piece of Latin into English. After a day or so translate the English version back into Latin. This method can be successfully adopted to learn any foreign language. The book is very entertaining, being full of the writer's own experiences, reminiscences and anecdotes. The most interesting anecdote is that of his interview with Lady Jane Grey, described to support the view that love and gentleness are better persuaders of children to learning than beating. Though a great humanist himself he was more concerned with morals than with art and beauty. That is why he did not approve of the young Englishmen's going to Italy, for the Italy of his day he regarded as a land of vice. He quotes the popular saying: Englishman Italianate, is a devil incarnate. Thus we see that both books of Ascham, though written from utilitarian motives, rise to the rank of literature by the charm of their matter as well as manner. He aimed at simplicity and brevity and attained them in a greater measure than any prose writer of his time. Making allowance for his time it would be no exaggeration to say that he is

the first writer of classical English prose.

Translators of the Bible: Tyndale, Coverdale, Cranmer, Latimer. William Tyndale, the first translator of the Scripture after Wycliff, issued his translation of the New Testament in 1525 from Germany where he had taken refuge from the persecution of Henry VIII who was at the time still a bigoted opponent of the Reformation. He did not, however, escape the long arm of the King and was put to death in Holland. After the Reformation had become a settled fact, Tyndale's translation together with Miles Coverdale's translation of the Old Testament appeared as the complete English Bible. This and several other translations which appeared in later years formed the basis of the famous Authorised Version of 1611. The importance of these Bible translations in forming English prose cannot be over-emphasised. The translators struck a nice balance between the pedantry of the learned and the vulgarity of the illiterate. By a skilful use of the old Biblical language, simple yet dignified, and of a certain touch of quaintness, the translators achieved a charm at once of the exotic and the familiar. Such memorable words and phrases as 'flesh and blood', 'take his cross', 'the fat of the land', 'a labour of love', 'the eleventh hour', 'the shadow of death', enriched not only English literature but lent grace and beauty to the speech of the masses.

To the translations of the Bible was added in 1549 the *Book of Common Prayer* prepared under Edward VI. This, a translation from the Latin prayer book, was in the main the work of Archbishop Cranmer and a solid contribution to English prose. It is a monumental work of inspiration, and poetic cadence.

Hugh Latimer, though not a stylist, deserves a place beside the translators by virtue of his sermons. These are vigorous attacks on the laziness of the Protestant clergy couched in simple and homely phrases of trenchant and telling censure. Faithful to the reformed creed, he was burnt at the stake in the reign of Mary. His last words to Bishop Ridley, a brother in martyrdom, are famous: "Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England as I trust shall never be put out."

The man who recorded the dying speech of Latimer, John Foxe, achieved still greater fame by his *Book of Martyrs* (1563), in which are recorded the heroic deeds and words of Protestant martyrs. It is in style plain and unadorned, depending for its appeal on its sincerity, exactness of detail, and drama. The book attracted wide attention even on the Continent and was perhaps the most popular book of the century after the Bible. It did more than any other piece of writing to spread hatred of Roman Catholicism in England.

A similar service was done to Scotland by John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland*.

BOOK FOUR
THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

CHAPTER 10

ELIZABETHAN POETRY : SPENSER (1552—1599)

The Shepherd's Calendar—Spenser: his life and works—*The Fairy Queen* in detail.

Tottell's Miscellany appeared in 1557 and summed up in the work of Wyatt and Surrey the poetic achievement of early English Renaissance. Nothing of real merit appeared during the next two decades, for though there are some good things in Sackville and Gascoigne, they did not make any significant contribution. Then a new star suddenly blazed on the literary firmament. This was Edward Spenser. With him we are in the full tide of the Renaissance in England. The appearance of his *Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579 opened a new epoch in English poetry. Nothing like this had been written after Chaucer, and Spenser was universally acclaimed as the topmost poet of the age. His position as the second great poet of England was confirmed by the publication, eleven years later, of *the Fairy Queen*, his masterpiece.

Spenser who belonged to a poor Lancashire family was born in London about 1552. He was educated at Cambridge where he took his M.A. degree in 1576. He was admitted to the household of the Earl of Leicester and thus to the friendship of Sir Philip Sidney, his nephew. In 1580 he went to Ireland as secretary to the governor and lived there an exile for the rest of his life except for two short visits to England. He held various government offices in Ireland and ultimately settled there on a large estate granted to him. There he was visited by Sir Walter Raleigh to whom he read his *Fairy Queen*. Sir Walter was so delighted with the poem that he brought him over

to England and introduced him to the Queen who conferred upon him a pension of £50 a year. It was during this visit (1589-90) that the *Fairy Queen* containing the first three books was published (1590). On his second visit to England (1595-96) he brought with him the other three books of the *Fairy Queen* (together with a fragment on *Mutability* for the seventh book) and these were published in 1596. Failing to obtain any further court favour he returned to Ireland. In a rebellion in 1598 his castle was burnt down and he escaped to England. He died in extreme poverty at an inn in London in January 1599. He was buried near Chaucer in the Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Works. Besides *The Shepherd's Calendar* and *The Fairy Queen*, Spenser's most important works are: *Astrophel*, a pastoral elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney, *Colin Clout's Come Home Again*, *Amoretti*, a sonnet cycle and *Epithalamion*, a marriage Ode, both addressed to his wife; *Prothalamion*, celebrating the marriage of the two daughters of the Earl of Worcester; and *Four Hymns in Honour of Love and Beauty*.

Among his minor works may be mentioned the *Complaints containing sundry small poems of the world's vanity*. Two of these, *Mother Hubert's Tale* and *Tears of the Muses*, are of interest as showing Spenser's pessimism induced, no doubt, by personal frustration. His disappointment in getting court favour found expression in *Mother Hubert's Tale*, a satire on the court, the clergy and Lord Burleigh, the close-fisted Chancellor of the Queen. *Tears of the Muses* bewails the sad state of the Muses who have no patrons in this barbaric age.

The Shepherd's Calendar with which Spenser made his poetic debut is a pastoral poem modelled on Theocritus and Virgil and their Italian and French followers of the Renaissance. It consists of twelve eclogues or short pastoral poems, one for each month of the year. They are in the form of dialogues among shepherds including the poet under the name of Colin Clout. Though the *Calendar* is Renaissance in spirit, it is written in deliberately archaic language to give it a national character. The most remarkable thing about it, however, is the richness and variety of the metres used. The stanzas are of different kinds and lines of every length. The principle of balance and symmetry is meticulously observed. It was this artistry, this virtuosity, of form which gave the *Shepherd's Calendar* its special character at a time when poetry was still crude and formless. The subject is of little importance. England is represented as a vast sheep-farm ruled by the Shepherd Queen Elisa, daughter of Pan and Syrinx. Against this background the poet discourses of love, poetry, Puritanism and other current topics. Here is a description of Elisa—

April

See, where she sits upon the grassie greene,
(O seemely sight!)
Yclad in Scarlet, like a mayden Queene,

And ermines white:
 Upon her head a Cremosin coronet,
 With Damaske roses and Daffadillies set :
 Bay leaves betweene,
 And primroses greene,
 Embellish the sweete Violet!

(From *The Shepherd's Calendar*)

Astrophel, a pastoral elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney, is in the form of allegory. Though graceful in its decorative disguise it hardly elevates the romantic hero of Zutphen. *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* is another pastoral and is the most autobiographical and the most lively of Spenser's works. In it are recorded the poet's experiences of his first visit to England in 1589-90 when he was introduced by Sir Walter Raleigh to the Queen and published his *Fairy Queen*.

The Amoretti and the Epithalamion

After his return to Ireland Spenser fell in love with Elizabeth Boyle, 'a cauntry lasse', his neighbour. The lady was won after a long and agonising courtship. Spenser recorded his emotions in a series of sonnets called the *Amoretti*. They have been disparaged by some critics as average, but no dispassionate reader can fail to be impressed by their beauty. The distinction of Spenser's sonnets is that the love expressed in them was real and not pretended, as was the case with the generality of sonnets. Besides, it was pure. His friend Sidney's love also seems to have been sincere, but it was not pure in that it was for a married woman. In form Spenser's sonnets are neither Petrarchan nor strictly Shakespearean. They have three quatrains and a couplet, the rhyme arrangement being *abab, bcbe, eded, ee*. Here is sonnet LXXXI describing his beloved after she has relented—

LXXXI

Fayre is my love, when her fayre golden heares
 With the loose wynde ye waving chance to marke;
 Fayre, when the rose in her red cheekes appeares;
 Or in her eyes the fyre of love does sparke.
 Fayre, when her brest, lyke a rich laden barke,
 With pretious merchandize she forth doth lay;
 Fayre, when that cloud of pryde, which oft doth dark
 Her goodly light, with smiles she drives away.
 But fayrest she, when so she doth display
 The gate with pearles and rubyes richly dight;
 Throgh which her words so wise do make their way
 To heare the message of her gentle spright.
 The rest be works of natures wonderment:
 But this the worke of harts astonishment.

The sonnets conclude with the *Epithalamion* or bridal Ode in long stanzas of seventeen, eighteen or nineteen lines, the last being a refrain that echoes throughout the poem. It is a magnificent composition unsurpassed for its graceful feeling, frankly voluptuous

descriptions and haunting melody. It is not only the best bridal poem in the language, but the best of all Spenser's works. *The Fairy Queen* may be his greatest poem, but the *Epithalamion* is certainly the best and the most delightful. The following stanza describes the bride's spiritual beauty:

But if ye saw that which no eyes can see,
The inward beauty of her lively spright,
Gernisht with heavenly guifts of high degree,
Much more then would ye wonder at that sight,
And stand astonisht lyke to those which red
Medusaes mazel' hed.
There dwels sweet love, and constant chastity,
Unspotted fayth, and comely womanhood,
Regard of honour, and mild modesty;
There vertue raynes as Queene in royal throne,
And giveth lawes alone,
The which the base affections doe obay,
And yeeld theyr services unto her will;
Ne thought of thing uncomely ever may
Thereto approach to tempt her mind to ill.
Had ye once seene these her celestial treasures,
And unrevealed pleasures,
Then would ye wonder, and her prayses sing,
That al the woods should answer, and your eccho ring.

Coming to the *Prothalamion* written 'in honour of the double marriage' of the two daughters of the Earl of Worcester, it is enough to say that the 'Spousal' song is second only to the *Epithalamion* and to no other. To appreciate Coleridge's praise of its 'swan-like movement' the poem has to be read in its entirety.

The Four Hymns to Love and Beauty

Though among the last of his publications, two of these hymns, Spenser says, were written in the greener days of his youth. As they were in praise of earthly love and earthly beauty, his better judgement disapproved of them. So he amended them and added two more in honour of Heavenly love and Heavenly beauty. It is necessary to understand this change as it has a direct bearing on Spenser's philosophy of Beauty as expressed in his works. Spenser as a child of Renaissance was a passionate lover of beauty in all forms, particularly beauty in woman. But he was also a Puritan, and though a refined one, his conscience troubled him. He was torn by a conflict between paganism and Christianity. In order to reconcile the conflicting claims of the flesh and the spirit he took refuge in the idealistic doctrine of Plato who had identified supreme beauty with virtue. It is this spiritual conception of love and beauty that finds its loftiest expression in these *Hymns*. Beauty here is not so much the beauty of mortal body as that of the immortal spirit. The following stanza from the *Hymn to Beauty* sums up this philosophy—

Therefore wherever that thou doest behold
A comely corpse, with beautie faire endewed,

Know this for certaine, that the same doth hold
 A beauteous soule, with faire conditions thewed,
 Fit to receive the seede of vertue strewed;
 For all that faire is, is by nature good;
 That is a signe to know the gentle blood.

The Fairy Queen. In the prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh describing the plan of *Fairy Queen*, Spenser says that its aim was 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline'. In other words, the author wanted to portray an ideal gentleman. For this purpose he chose King Arthur who was to exhibit in his person, before he became king, 'magnificence' or magnanimity, which according to Aristotle is the perfection of all the twelve ethical or private moral virtues enumerated by him. The *Fairy Queen* was to set forth these twelve virtues in twelve books. A second part consisting presumably of the same number of books was to deal with politic or public virtues of Arthur after he became king. To say nothing of the second part, only six of the projected twelve books of the first were completed.

The Plot. Prince Arthur falls in love with Gloriana, the fairy queen, whom he sees in a dream. He sets out on his journey to her court in Fairyland where she is holding her annual twelve-day festival. On each of these days a Knight representing one of the virtues undertakes an adventure. Arthur is brought into these adventures which end successfully through his aid. This seems to have been the plan as explained in the prefatory letter referred to above, but is not fully carried out, for the author plunges straight into the adventures of the Knights, intending to fill the gaps and round off the story in the last of the twelve books of which as we know, only six were written. The subjects of these six are as follows:

Book I. The adventures of the Red Cross Knight or Holiness who protects Una or True Religion (Protestant Church) against the enchanter Archimago or Hypocrisy and Duessa or Falsehood (Roman Catholic Church).

Book II. The adventures of Sir Guyon or Temperance, the chief of which are his visit to the cave of Mammon and destruction of Acrasia or Intemperance and her Bower of Bliss.

Book III. The adventures of the female knight Britomartis or Chastity.

Book IV. The legend of Triamond and Cambell symbolising Friendship.

Book V. The adventures of Artegall or Justice, with references to various historical events of Elizabeth's reign, such as the Spanish defeat in the Netherlands, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, etc.

Book VI. The adventures of Sir Calidore or Courtesy.

The Fairy Queen was inspired by Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (Orlando mad with love), but it differs from its Italian model in that it is not merely a romance but an allegorical romance with the

set purpose of teaching high moral lessons. This was foreign to the Italian romancers and it is precisely this didacticism that has made the poem less popular than it might otherwise have been. It has met the same fate as *Paradise Lost*. All admire but few read it. Spenser succeeds neither as allegorist nor as romancer. The allegory hampers the romance and the romance hampers the allegory. The allegory starts well and is sustained through the first two books but breaks down in the later books. Similarly the romance is not continuous, being sometimes interrupted and sometimes overlaid with allegory. To make matters worse the allegory is double, sometimes treble. The characters stand for moral virtues or vices as well as for historical persons and institutions. For example, Arthur signifying magnanimity is also divine grace and even Leicester, the favourite of Queen Elizabeth. Gloriana, the fairy queen, is also Elizabeth signifying the Protestant Church struggling against Duessa signifying Falseness who is also the Roman Catholic Church as well as Mary Queen of Scots. This allegory at various levels—moral, religious, political—is further complicated by allusions to many historical persons and events too difficult to decipher. Tedious as the allegory is, it cannot be altogether ignored, embodying as it does Spenser's highest ideals of life and conduct. To his own age, Spenser was a poet of virtue and Milton called him 'our sage and serious spenser'. The only criticism to which Spenser lays himself open is that he has not succeeded in fusing his moral ideal with the other elements of his conception. There is first the spirit of Chivalry with its exaltation of the virtues of valour, honour, and veneration for women. To this is added the spiritual ideal of christianised Platonism. These two may combine somehow, but how can Platonic spirituality be reconciled to the poet's love of Renaissance beauty?

Besides, there are other defects. Spenser had no dramatic power. His characters are lifeless, and with the exception of a few women, notably Britomartis, mere abstractions. The adventures, like those of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, with their enchantments, dragons, distressed damsels, dungeons and fights—become monotonous because of their sameness.

This is a formidable list of defects which would damn any lesser poet than Spenser. The fact is that Spenser's genius was exuberant rather than constructive. All the prolixity and complexity which we have pointed out were the result of an overflowing imagination. He had no sense of unity. He tried to do too many things at the same time, but could not fuse them into one and only succeeded in producing a medley.

Where then is the charm of *The Fairy Queen*? The charm of the poem lies in its magnificent pictures and hypnotic music. For all his pose as a moral teacher, Spenser's dominant passion was his love of beauty—earthly, sensuous beauty. And this beauty is splashed over the whole poem in an un-ending series of pictures of lovely women and scenes of nature and art. Further, he unfolds this

glamorous pageant to the accompaniment of soft, slow music that echoes throughout the poem. We give below a few stanzas describing Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, perhaps the most voluptuous scene in the book.

Acrasia's Bower of Bliss

And all the margent round about was sett
With shady Laurell trees, thence to defend
The sunny beames which on the billowes bett,
And those which therein bathed mote offend.
As Guyon happned by the same to wend,
Two naked Damzelles he therein espyde,
Which therein bathing seemed to contend
And wrestle wantonly, ne car'd to hyde
Their Gainty partes from vew of any which them eyd.

Sometimes the one would lift the other quight
Above the waters, and then downe againe
Her plog, as over-maystered by might,
Where both awhile would covered remaine,
And each the other from to rise restraine;
The whiles their snowy limbes, as through a vele,
So through the christall waves appeared plaine:
Then suddainly both would themselves unhele,
And th'amarous sweet spoi'es to greedy eyes revele.

As that faire Starre, the messenger of morne,
His deawy face out of the sea doth reare;
Or as the Cyprian goddess, newly borne
Of th' Ocean's fruitfull froth, did first appeare;
Such seemed they, and so their yellow heare
Christalline humor dropped downe apace.
Whom such when Guyon saw, he drew him neare,
And somewhat gan relent his earnest pace;
His stubborne brest gan secret pleasaunce to embrace.

The wanton Maidens, him espying, stood
Gazing awhile at his unwonted guise;
Then th' one her selfe low ducked in the flood,
Abasht that her a straunger did avise;
But thother rather higher did arise,
And her two lilly paps aloft displayed.
And all that night his melting hart entyse
To her delights she unto him bewrayd;
The rest hidd underneath him more desirous made.

To his own age Spenser may have been a teacher; to us he is first and last the incomparable painter and musician in verse. For sheer beauty of words and the soothing harmonies of the stanzas framing them he has no equal in English poetry. He seemed to possess an unlimited capacity to throw out such stanzas of luscious music by the hundred. It is by virtue of this seemingly inexhaustible power of producing pictorial and rhythmic beauty that he has been called "the poet's poet." He has inspired more poets than any other in the English language. They have instinctively turned to his artistic language and metrical music. The praise however carries its own limitations. He may be the "poet's poet" but not the average reader's. His language is deliberately archaic, a blend of Chaucer's

rustic dialect, and his own coinages. Ben Jonson said that Spenser 'writ no language'. This remark has led critics to exaggerate his archaism. Spenser could not have achieved such poetic diction if he had not exploited all the resources of the language *as it was at the time*.

The stanza which he invented and which is called after him the Spenserian stanza was a stroke of genius. In the words of Saintsbury it is "one of the crowning achievements of poetical inspiration in form." It consists of nine lines rhyming *ababbcbcc*, the last being an Alexandrine or line of six iambic feet instead of five as in the others. It is particularly suitable for a long and continuous poem, its last line giving it a slow, stately movement. It became very popular in the later Romantic Revival and was used by Thomson, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Keats.

CHAPTER 11

ELIZABETHAN POETRY : SPENSER'S CONTEMPORARIES

Sidney: his *Astrophel and Stella*—The Sonneteers: Daniel, Drayton, Constable
Shakespeare's sonnets—Lyrics and songs in Miscellanies, in stories and
plays—Other kinds of poetry: historical, satirical, philosophical, etc.

Sidney (1554-1586)

Unlike Spenser who began life as a poor man and died poor, his friend Sir Philip Sidney was an aristocrat. He came of a very high family, was educated at Oxford and travelled over Europe. Spenser dedicating his *Shepherd's Calendar* to him described him as 'the noble and virtuous gentleman most worthy of all titles both of learning and chivalry'. There is neither flattery nor exaggeration in this description, for Sidney realized in his person, as nearly as possible for any man, the Renaissance ideal of the perfect gentleman. He was a Knight of chivalry, a polished courtier and a finished scholar. He died fighting at Zutphen (in the Netherlands) at the age of 32. The story of his noble act on the battlefield is well known. As he lay dying, he gave the cup of water which he needed himself to another wounded soldier saying, 'Thy need is greater than mine'. The traditional hallow of romance about his person has not dimmed with the passage of time.

Sidney's poetical work consists of the sonnet series *Astrophel and Stella* and a few other scattered sonnets and verses in his prose romance *Arcadia*. The *Arcadia* and his critical treatise *Apology for Poetry* will be noticed under Prose.

None of Sidney's works were published in his life time and *Astrophel and Stella* must have circulated privately in manuscript before 1591 when it was published. This is a series of more than a hundred sonnets together with some songs addressed to Penelope Devereux, daughter of Walter Devereux, first Earl of Essex. The sonnets record his hopeless passion for Penelope who had married Lord Rich. Except for the rhyme scheme which is not uniform the sonnets of Sidney are English or Shakespearean in form with three quatrains and a couplet. The general level of these sonnets is very

high despite the fact that Sidney is not above using the conventional 'conceits' or laboured ingenuities of expression. He was not a mere copyist. The note of sincerity is struck in the last line of the first sonnet 'Fool, said my muse to me, look in thy heart and write.' That in which he tells the moon of his lady's cruelty is worth quoting in full—

WITH how sad steps, O moon, thou climb'st the skies!

How silently, and with how wan a face!
What! may it be that even in heavenly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long-with-love acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case:
I read it in thy looks; thy languish'd grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state describes.

Then, even of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constant love deem'd there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be loved, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call 'virtue' there—ungratefulness?

The one in which he addresses Sleep—

Come, sleep; O Sleep, the certain knot of peace.

and that in which he abjures Love

Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust,

are equally beautiful. In short, the sincerity of feeling, matched here and there with choice expression, marks out some of these sonnets as among the finest of that age.

The Sonneteers

After its introduction by Wyatt and Surrey the sonnet in its strict form was not practised for a whole generation. Sidney, whose sonnet sequence appeared in 1591, restarted the fashion and there was an extraordinary outburst of sonnets in the last decade of the century. Almost all poets of the period wrote sonnet sequences, good, bad, and indifferent, addressed to their sweet hearts real or imagined. The more important of these are Fulke Greville's *Caelica*, Samuel Daniel's *Delia*, Michael Drayton's *Idea*, Spenser's *Amoretti*, Henry Constable's *Diana* and Shakespeare's, which though written about this time were not published until 1609.

Each of the poets mentioned above has some distinction or other. Fulke Greville is too scholarly to be very popular, but his *Caelica* has a few delightful things. Specially his lines on Myra beginning—'I with whose colours Myra dressed her head'. Though Daniel and Drayton, both major poets, lack the sinews of the sonnet, namely, passion, they are not without distinction of style.

Daniel is straightforward and crisp in diction—

And therefore, Delia, 'tis to me no blot
To have attempted, tho' attained thee not. (Sonnet 3)

Thou may'st repent that thou hast scorn'd my tears,
When Winter snows upon thy sable hairs. (Sonnet 4)

Drayton is more vigorous and forthright—

'Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part'. Rossetti pronounced this sonnet as 'almost the best in the language, if not quite'.

Constable's sonnets have the charm of delicate fancy and scholarly elegance.

Shakespeare's sonnets are a class by themselves. The collection is unequal and some of the sonnets are merely 'clever', being fashionable exercises in quibbles and conceits common to the generality of sonneteers. But the best of them are worthy of the great poet, and in their high imaginative quality, felicity of diction and lyrical music, are unequalled in Elizabethan poetry. Only Milton's sonnets when they appeared could challenge comparison with his. The collection is miscellaneous as well as mystifying and the industrious researches of more than three centuries have not penetrated the mystery of the persons addressed in the sonnets. Some of them are quite impersonal. Of the personal sonnets, some are addressed to a friend, a handsome young man of rank and wealth, and some to a dark-haired lady. The friend is popularly identified with Shakespeare's patron, the young Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. The dark lady whom Shakespeare loved betrayed him with his patron friend. He forgives the friend, but is unforgiving to the lady on whom he pours his vials of wrath and hate.

The original source of inspiration of all these sonnet sequences was, of course, Petrarch whose love sonnets to Laura had started the fashion in Italy and then in France. The English poets imitated, borrowed, sometimes simply translated from their Italian or French masters. Because of this, some critics have condemned the whole lot as artificial. It is undeniable that the majority of these sonnets are monotonous and dull. They are mere exercises in conceits which are repeated *ad nauseum*. Where every Delia or Caelia is a paragon of beauty and flint hearted, where every lover languishes in despair and utters his undying love in the same conceits, it becomes quite apparent that the writer is not inspired by love but is simply playing with a fashionable fiction. Only Spenser, Sidney and Shakespeare had sincere motives and even in following an artistic convention acquitted themselves creditably. Of the swarm who joined the craze, only a few attained that degree of artistic excellence which has entitled them to a place in the anthologies. Considering that more than two thousand sonnets were produced during this period, it was not to be expected that all would be first rate or that every poet or poetaster would show

individual originality. In following a particular literary convention the test of originality is truth of feeling and the manner of its treatment. A poet may borrow an idea or image, and yet may be original if he handles it independently in his own way. Making due allowance, therefore, for imitations and translations, quite a fair percentage of these sonnets are worthy to rank beside the best lyrical poems in the language.

Lyrics and Songs. Another type of poem, even more numerous than the sonnets, which flourished in this age was the lyric. Humanism had revealed to the people a new joy in life and this joy burst into song. England became 'a nest of singing birds'. Lyrics and songs by the hundred written by poets known and unknown appeared in collections of the type of *Tottel's Miscellany* and in song-books published with music. We have already mentioned two of the miscellanies, *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1576) and *The Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1678) which appeared before Spenser. These were crude as compared with those which followed them in the Spenserian period—*A Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584), *The Phoenix Nest* (1593), *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1599), *England's Helicon* (1600) and *Poetical Rhapsody* (1602). The best of these is *England's Helicon* which contains poems by most of the poets of this period, including Sidney, Spenser, Drayton, Lodge, Peele, Greene, Marlowe, Watson, Nicholas Breton, Barnfield, Raleigh and Shakespeare. The majority of the poems in these collections are anonymous, only a few being signed, and but for these anthologies even the names of some of the songsters would have been lost. Of the numerous song-books the most famous were the four *Books of Airs* by Campion containing songs set to music.

Besides the miscellanies and song-books, songs are found scattered through stories and plays of the period. Though Spenser was not devoted to the lyric, he has given us some delightful songs in *The Shepherd's Calendar* and *The Fairy Queen*. Sidney's songs in the *Astrophel and Stella* have already been alluded to and there are some very good ones in his *Arcadia*. The best songs of this age, however, were written by the dramatists—Lyly, Peele, Lodge, Nash, Greene, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher, Dekker, Heywood, and Ben Jonson, Some of these songs are in their plays, others outside them.

Greene's lullaby—

Weep not my wanton, smile upon my knee,

Dekker's—

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers,

Marlowe's—

Come live with me and be my love,

and Ben Jonson's—

Drink to me only with thine eyes,

— these and many others not less delightful may be read in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*.

But the glory of song is Shakespeare's. The songs sprinkled through his plays are unsurpassed for their originality, spontaneity, feeling for nature and verbal music. And they are of all sorts. There are love songs, nature songs, pathetic songs, and songs that are purely fantastic. Some of the most memorable may be referred to by their first lines—

- Tell me where is Fancy bred? (*The Merchant of Venice*)
 O mistress mine, where are you roaming? (*Twelfth Night*)
 When daisies pied and violets blue (*Love's Labour's Lost*)
 When daffodils begin to peer (*Winter's Tale*)
 Blow, blow, thou winter wind (*As you Like It*)
 Full fathom five thy father lies (*The Tempest*)

These songs too may be read in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. but they are best enjoyed in the dramatic context where they appear.

Considering their mass production the lyrics and songs attain a level of excellence that is surprising, for even the third rate are at least poetry. Though their main theme is love, they deal with all kinds of subjects and defy classification. In their naturalness, innocence and sweetness they are so childlike and yet highly artistic in choice of words and versification. No other age has produced such abundance of song or recaptured their old world charm.

Longer Love Poems. In addition to the short and sweet lyrics there were a few longer narrative love poems. Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* was left unfinished and was completed by Chapman. Following this lead Shakespeare wrote *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). All the three are erotic poems full of sensuous beauty. They were very popular though frowned upon by the puritans.

Other Kinds of Poetry

Though love poetry was by far the most popular, there were so many other kinds—historical, philosophical, religious, moral, satirical and pastoral. Of these, only the historical and satirical deserve some notice. The historical school includes William Warner, Daniel and Drayton. They were all inspired by patriotic motives to glorify their country. Warner's *Albion's England* (1586), a huge poem in fourteeners is a history of England from Noah to Elizabeth. Daniel's *Civil Wars of York and Lancaster* and Drayton's *The Barons' Wars*, *England's Heroical Epistles*, *The Ballad of Agincourt* and the enormous *Polyolbion* in thirty books complete the list of historical poems. The best of these is the *Ballad of Agincourt*—'Fair stood the wind for France'—and may be read in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*.

The satirical school consists of Bishop Hall, Lodge, Marston, Tourneur and Donne. Satire had been attempted before Spenser in Gascoigne's *Steel Glass*, but was not followed up (except in prose) until towards the end of the sixteenth century. These satires are coarse in matter and harsh and rugged in versification. Donne's satires are the best. Though most of his poetical work was done in the reign of James, he has a romantic vein by virtue of which he belongs to the Elizabethans.

Of the remaining kinds of poetry, the philosophical school is best represented by Lord Bacon and Sir Henry Wotton. The former's poem on *Life* and the latter's on the *Character of a Happy Life* can be read in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*.

CHAPTER 12

ELIZABETHAN PROSE

Elizabethan prose not so great as its poetry and drama—Prose translations before Spenser—Lyly's *Euphues*—Its style—Sidney's *Arcadia*—Other writers of fiction: Lodge, Greene, Nash, Deloney—The Pamphleteers: Martin Marprelate, Hooker, Bacon—Criticism: Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*—The craze for classical metres: Webb, Puttenham and Daniel—History: Hall, Holinshed, Stowe, Raleigh's *History of the World*—Travel: Hakluyt, Purchas—The great translations: Plutarch's *Lives*, Florio's *Montaigne*.

The prose of the Elizabethan period is not so brilliant as its poetry or drama. Historically it reached in this period the middle stage of its development. In thought, diction and style it is nearer to modern times than the older prose, say the prose of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. But still it is not modern prose. Poetry and romance were heavy in the air and clung to its prose. Thus most of the Elizabethan prose is poetic, and except in a few cases, coloured with romantic conceits. Again, stimulated as it was by foreign models—Classical, Italian, French and Spanish—made available through translations, much of this prose is rather juvenile, artificial and conventional. It is also, with very few exceptions, verbose. This was natural in the circumstances of the age. It was an age abounding in vitality; the resources of the language had increased vastly through translations; what wonder that prose which is not subject to the restrictions of verse should overflow with words?

Among the translations before Spenser, the two that had most influence were North's *Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius* (1557), and Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-67). Painter's book is a collection of tales mainly from the classics and the Italian of Boccaccio and Bandello. This proved a prolific source of plots to the Elizabethan dramatists including Shakespeare, who took from it the story of Romeo and Juliet. North's *Golden Book* was a translation of *The Dial of Princes* written by a Spanish ecclesiastic, Guevara. A translation of a shorter version of this same book by Lord Berners had appeared as early as 1534. Its highly elaborate, antithetical and epigrammatical style had an irresistible attraction for aristocratic circles and the book was reprinted many times. It was this book

which is supposed to have inspired Lyly's *Euphues*, the first great book of ornate prose in English.

Lyly

The first part of this book, *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*, appeared in 1579 followed by a second, *Euphues and his England* in 1580. It is a romance or romantic novel, if we are not too strict in using the term, for the novel proper was to come much later. Euphues, a rich and handsome Athenian youth visits Naples and there falls in love with Lucilla, the sweet-heart of his friend Philautus. The friends quarrel, but Lucilla jilts Euphues in favour of a third and very inferior suitor. The satire on women is obvious. For the rest, the book is didactic containing aphoristic reflections on education and morals. The second part is dedicated to 'the ladies and gentlewomen of England' who are highly praised for their beauty and virtue by way of making amends for the attack on them in the first. Euphues now transported to England lavishes high praise on the country, her people, queen, and specially her universities.

Although the book has story interest, some realism, and a good deal of aphoristic wisdom, it was not its matter so much as its curious manner which fascinated Lyly's contemporaries. The book was an immense and immediate success and went through many editions during a very short time. Euphuism became a craze with court ladies and fashionable gentlemen, who vied with one another in repeating its fine phrases and conceits. Among others two tricks of its style are obvious. The first is balance in sentences secured by antithesis and alliteration; the second is a succession of fantastic comparisons—metaphors and similes drawn from fabulous animals, plants, and precious stones. It is this second characteristic which is peculiarly Lyly's, for the first is found in other writers as well, though not so exaggerated as in him.

The far-fetched comparisons and fanciful images known as 'conceits' so appealed to the taste of the time that some of the greatest writers including Sidney and Shakespeare used them. Shakespeare's earlier comedies have many conceits and word plays, though he parodied them in his later plays like *Henry IV* and *Hamlet*. It was Drayton who condemned Euphuism in the strongest terms and it soon fell into disrepute. The conceit, however, in its slightly changed meaning of a quaint, highly refined or intricate thought, continued to colour the literature of the post-Elizabethan period down to the Restoration, and appears in its more fantastic forms in the poetry of the 'metaphysical' school.

Euphuism has its points—wit, sparkle, novelty—and it is no wonder its appeal was so wide-spread. But to the more refined modern tastes its interminable and monotonous antithesis and parallels are tedious. The following extracts from *Euphues* will serve to illustrate its special flavour.

A Father's Grief: Thou weepest for the death of thy daughter and I laugh,

at the folly of the father, for greater vanitie is there in the minde of the mourner then bitterness in the death of the deceased. But she was amiable, but yet sinful, but she was young and might have lived, but she was mortall and must have dyed. I(Ay) but hir youth made thee often merry, I but thine age shold once make thee wise. I but hir greene yeares wer unfit for death, I but thy hoary haire should dispyse life. Knowest thou not, *Eubulus*, that life is the gift of God, death the due of Nature; as we receive the one as a benefite, so must we abide the other of necessitie. Wise men have found that by learning which old men should know by experience, that in life ther is nothing sweete, in death nothing sowre.

(From *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit*)

Continue not in Anger: Friendshippe should be like the wine which *Homer*, much commending, calleth Maroneum, whereof one pinte being mingled with five quartes of water, yet it keepeth his old strength and vertue, not to be qualified by any discourtesie. Where salt doth grow nothing els can breede, where friendship is built no offence can harbour.

(From *Euphues and his England*)

Although iron the more it is used the brighter it is, yet silver with much wearing doth waste to nothing: though the cammock the more it is bowed the better it serveth, yet the bow the more it is bent and occupied the weaker it waxeth: though the camomill the more it is trodden and pressed down, the more it spreadeth, yet the violet the oftener it is handled and touched the sooner it decayeth.

(From *Euphues*)

Though the stone Cylindrus at every thunder-clap roll from the hill, yet the pure sleek stone mounteth at the noise; though the rust fret the hardest steel, yet doth it not eat into the emerald; though polypus change his hue, yet the salamander keepeth his colour; though...yet..., though...yet..., though...yet...!

(From *Euphues*)

Sidney

Conceit of quite another kind was invented by Sir Philip Sidney in his *Arcadia* which though written about the same time as *Euphues* was published posthumously in 1590. Inspired by a Greek romance of Heliodorus of Syria, 3rd cent; author of *Aethiopica*, it is a pastoral romance which Sidney wrote as a pastime to entertain his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. It is a fantastic story of kings and courtiers, princes and princesses, in a land of enchanting pastoral beauty, the Greek Arcadia, a very paradise on earth. In this utopia the highest ideals of love, friendship, courage and knightly courtesy prevail. But again, as in the case of *Euphues*, it is the style which arrests attention. It is Euphuism with a difference, and may well be called Arcadianism. It is highly poetic, the poetry being heightened by extra refinement or preciousness and the figure of speech called pathetic fallacy. For example:

In Arcadia: There were hilles which garnished their proud heights with stately trees; humble valleis, whose base estate seemed comforted with the refreshing of silver rivers; meadows, enameld with all sorts of ey-pleasing floures; thickets, which being lined with most pleasant shade, were witnessed so to by the cheerful deposition of many wel-tuned birds; each pasture stored with sheep, feeding with sober security; while the pretty lambs with bleating oratory craved the dams comfort; here a shepherds boy piping, as though he should never be old; there a yong shepherdesse knitting, and withal singing, and it seemed that

her voice comforted her hands to work, and her hands kept time to her voices
music. (Book I, chap. 2)

Its poetic quality is undeniable and 'arcadianism' influenced mostly poets—the love-poets, sonneteers, and the metaphysicals. But it is much too involved and slipshod for prose. It is as artificial as Euphuism though a little less tiring. It was only the sweet memory of the writer that preserved its vogue a little longer. On the whole both the *Euphues* and the *Arcadia* are curiosities of literary history, for they made no significant contribution either to prose style or to fiction.

Other Writers of Fiction

Lodge, Greene, Nash, Deloney. Sterile as both Lyly and Sidney were as novelists, some advance in story-telling was made by Lodge and Greene, both imitators of Lyly. Lodge's romance *Rosalynde* which was actually described in its subtitle as *Euphues' Golden Legacy* supplied the plot to Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and Greene's *Pandosto* to that of *The Winter's Tale*. But real advance in the art of fiction was made by Nash whose picaresque romance *Jack Wilton or The Unfortunate Traveller* is regarded by some as the first Elizabethan novel. The picaresque novel or novel dealing with the adventures of a rogue (from *pícaro*, a rogue) originated in Spain. Nash's book narrates the adventures of Jack Wilton, a page in the army of Henry VIII, with a surprising wealth of realistic incident and in a style at once racy, witty and humorous. It is a complete departure from the euphuistic romances of Lodge and Greene and is altogether the most delightful thing in Elizabethan fiction.

Curiously enough, however, Nash was 'surpassed in popularity by a much less gifted writer, Thomas Deloney. His stories, *Jack of Newbury*, *Thomas of Reading*, *The Gentle Craft*, are more in line with the later novel of the eighteenth century than those of his greater contemporaries. The secret lies in his subjects as well as in his style. Instead of dealing with the far-fetched or exotic he concentrated on English life and depicted it in a plain, natural style. He was a weaver by trade and kept close to the life of the artisan. *His Gentle Craft*, which is all about shoemakers, is the most famous of his histories and supplied the plot for Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*.

The Pamphleteers

A form of prose writing that was peculiar to the time was the pamphlet. Pamphlets were written on all kinds of subjects and were specially used in controversies—literary, religious and political. The most famous of these, the Martin Marprelate controversy, centred round episcopacy or government of the Church by bishops. The Puritans were opposed to the institution of bishops and an anonymous champion of their cause who called himself Marprelate

published a series of pamphlets containing ribald attacks upon episcopacy. The bishops replied in the same terms enlisting on their side such gifted writers as Lyly, Greene, Lodge, and above all, Nash, the most vigorous pamphleteer of the time. The controversy which began in 1588 ended with the seizure of the secret press of the Martinists and the hanging of one Penry in 1593, but the identity of Martin remains a mystery to this day.

Hooker. It was an unseemly controversy and is of little literary interest except in so far as it exercised the powers of English prose in the language of broad satirical humour and invective. But it had one important result. It provoked Richard Hooker, a country divine, to write his monumental book *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. It is a sober, dignified and closely reasoned defence of the church of England and its episcopal government. It is not mere theology: it is theology broad based on philosophy. The Puritans objected to episcopacy on the ground that it had no sanction in the scripture. To this Hooker replied that the scripture does not, cannot, provide for all matters and God's word has to be supplemented by reason in matters not covered by it. His is a plea for tolerance, understanding and freedom. The Puritan's literal interpretation of the Bible would tie the Christian hand and foot and make the church regulate not only the religious life of the people but their civil life as well. The Puritan position implied the subordination of the king and civil authority to the church, which would be a tyranny too terrible to contemplate.

Hooker's book is an object lesson in religious controversy. He conducts his argument on a burning question with a quiet, grave eloquence unprecedented in the controversies of the Reformation. True religion and philosophy had found in him an advocate of first rate literary power. His language is simple yet scholarly, and his sentences though long have a subdued poetic rhythm. His book remains a standard work of theology and is at the same time a classic of English prose.

Bacon (1561-1626). While few people today read Hooker's theological work, every student has to read Bacon's *Essays*. The first edition published in 1597 contained ten essays which were enlarged later to fifty eight. The *Essays* are what Bacon calls them in the sub-title 'Counsels, civil and moral'. They are full of practical wisdom designed to help in the successful conduct of life. It is frankly worldly wisdom without any pretence of idealism. Indeed the advice at places is plainly Machiavellian. For example, in his essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation' he says: "Besides (to say truth) nakedness is uncomely, as well in mind as body; and it addeth no small reverence to men's manners and actions, if they be not altogether open. The best composition and temperature is to have openness in fame and opinion; secrecy in habit; dissimulation in seasonable use; and a power to feign, if there be no remedy". No wonder this purveyor of worldly wisdom and apostle of success,

who had risen to the high office of Lord Chancellor, was convicted of bribery and embezzlement. The faults of his character, however, should not blind us to his merits as a writer. He was a practical psychologist with a sound knowledge of human nature, and this is observable everywhere in his essays. But it is their style even more than their matter which makes these essays so memorable. The essays are in the form of short pithy sayings or maxims, each of which may itself be expanded into an essay. Many of his statements sound like proverbs. For example: "What is truth? said gesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." "Revenge is a kind of wild justice." "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune." "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New." "Prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue." "A crowd is not company." "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man, and writing an exact man."

Such weighty sentences are scattered throughout the *Essays* and are supported by quotations from the ancients mostly Latin. He also uses words in their Latin meaning and his sentences are marked by balance and antithesis. The title, *Essays*, may have been suggested by Montaigne's *Essais* which had appeared as early as 1580, though not translated into English till 1603. There is, however, no similarity between the two. The Frenchman is pre-eminently personal and discursive while Bacon is impersonal and aphoristic. There is only one essay of Bacon's, that on Gardens, which is personal and reveals his delight in gardens: "God Almighty first planted a Garden."

A minor literary work of Bacon's is the *New Atlantis*. It is just another Utopia, which describes an imaginary island in the Pacific inhabited by scholars and scientists. The most interesting feature of this island is 'Solomon's House' which is dedicated to the pursuit of scientific research. The book which was published incomplete after Bacon's death is really an offshoot of his philosophical speculations. His principal philosophical works are the *Advancement of Learning* in English and the *Novum Organum* in Latin. In the *Advancement of Learning* the author discusses the various methods of advancing knowledge which he divides into history, poetry, and philosophy. In *Novum Organum* he expounds the inductive method of acquiring accurate knowledge, the method, that is to say, of observation and experiment and proceeding from the particular to the general. Thus Bacon may be said to have laid the foundation of modern science, though this is only grudgingly acknowledged, if not altogether denied.

Literary Criticism

There was little criticism in the Middle Ages. The earliest critical work was Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* (1553) to which reference has already been made. In the great Elizabethan period quite a number of critical works appeared, the most important of which is

Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*. They have no originality, being based on Italian and French critical literature which was itself derived from the ancients. In a very uncritical fashion they uphold classical theories regardless of their suitability to the national genius. The writers contradict themselves in actual practice. The questions that most concerned the critics were morality and classical metres. Stephen Gosson who had failed as a dramatist attacked all poetry and plays in his *School of Abuse* (1579). This puritan attack provoked Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* which, though written immediately after Gosson's attack, was published after his death, in 1595. This is an eloquent and delightful defence of poetry and ranks with Shelley's later essay on the same subject. The poet, says Sidney, is a maker, a creator, Nature's only and superior rival. For Nature's world is 'brazen', 'the poets alone deliver a golden'. 'He cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner'. Of the ballad of *Chevy Chase* he says: 'I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart stirred as with a trumpet'.

In his general attitude to literature Sidney is a classicist. He defends the 'unities' of classical drama and condemns the mixture of tragedy and comedy in contemporary romantic drama. He denounces artificial ornaments of style in his contemporaries and thus contradicts and condemns his own practice in the *Arcadia*. The *Apology* is written in simple, straightforward prose so unlike that of the *Arcadia*. It is one of the most delightful things in Elizabethan prose.

The other question that dominated criticism was that of adopting classical metres in English poetry. It was an exercise in futility, but it held in its grip the best brains of the time. Sidney, Spenser, Gabriel Harvey, and so many others toyed with the idea which developed into a craze. Webb's *Discourse of English Poetry* (1586) and Puttenham's much larger work, the *Art of English Poetry* (1589) deal with this question. Campion, the song writer, forgetting his own songs denounced rhyme in his *Observations in the Art of English Poetry* (1602). This provoked Daniel to write his *Defence of Rhyme* (1602), a sound and mature critical work which put an end to the craze for introducing classical metres into English poetry.

Historical Literature

The patriotic impulse of the period produced many chronicles such as those of Hall, Holinshed, and Stowe. They are mere catalogues of events written in ornate style of little distinction. Holinshed's *Chronicle* (1578-1586), the most popular of all, is of interest because it was used by Shakespeare for his plays. The only noteworthy historical work is Raleigh's *History of the World* which though incomplete and unequal makes the first attempt in

English at a philosophical survey of events. It is written in moderately ornate and forceful style and contains some passages of splendid eloquence including the famous one on death—

‘O eloquent, just and might Death! Whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised; thou hast drawn together all the far-stretched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet.*’ (here lies.....)

Literature of Travel

The same patriotic feeling that produced the chronicles was also responsible for the literature of travel. Touched to the quick by the French jibe that the English played safe in every venture, Richard Hakluyt, chaplain to the English Ambassador in France, determined to wipe off this national reproach. He collected all reports of English adventurers on the high seas and published his famous compilation with the lengthy title—*The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation made by Sea or Over Land to the most remote and farthest distant quarters of the earth at any time within the compass of these 1500 years* (1589). This work in three volumes is the most comprehensive account we have of English voyages of discovery and exploration. Hakluyt's work was continued in the next reign by Samuel Purchas in his *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrims* (1625).

Translations

No survey of Elizabethan prose would be complete without reference to the work of translators who opened the riches of the ancient and modern literatures to English eyes. The most scholarly as well as the most prolific translator of the age was Philemon Holland. He went straight to his originals and translated Livy, Pliny (the Elder), Plutarch's *Moralia* and Suetonis. But the most famous and by far the most popular translations are Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579) by Sir Thomas North, and Montaigne's *Essays* (1603) by John Florio. The English of these two translations, specially that of the *Lives* is so fluent, idiomatic and vigorous that they read like original masterpieces. This and their content made them the most popular reading of their day. Shakespeare used North's *Plutarch* for his Roman plays and borrowed not only the stories but sometimes the very words. The irresistible charm of Montaigne inspired the writing of the personal essay which in the eighteenth century was established as a new form of prose literature.

CHAPTER 13

THE DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

Religious origin of the drama in the middle ages—Miracle plays—Their collection in Cycles—Moralties: their growth in the 15th century side by side with the Miracles—*Everyman* and other moralities—Renaissance drama; decline of Miracles and bifurcation of Moralties into secular and religious—*The Four Elements*—Bale's *King John*—The Interlude: Heywood and *The Four Ps*—Classical influence on the drama—*Ralph Roister Doister*, the first comedy—*Gammer Gurton's Needle* the first farce—*Gorboduc* the first tragedy—Transitional period of intense dramatic activities 1550-1590—The birth of the national theatre—The University Wits: Lyly's prose comedies on classical subjects—Peele's plays on various subjects—Greene, Lodge and Nash—Kyd and his *Spanish Tragedy*—Marlowe's plays.

So far we have said nothing of the drama. Its consideration had to be postponed for good reasons. For one thing, the drama is a later growth; for another, the links in the chain of its development are not quite as clear as in the case of poetry and prose. Its period-wise treatment, therefore, would give a disjointed, if not confused, picture. In order that the student may have a continuous and coherent view of its origin and development, it has been considered advisable to make at this stage a rapid survey of the whole field of the drama from its earliest beginnings to the point where Shakespeare took it up.

Medieval Drama (12th – 15th centuries)

(The drama arose in England, as in other Catholic countries of Europe, in the attempts of the clergy to teach the masses the tenets of the Christian faith by dramatising the services of the church at Christmas and Easter. The plays were in Latin, the language was of the liturgy, and the actors were clergy.) Such scriptural plays in Latin are known to have been performed as early as the twelfth century. They were first given in the church, later in the churchyard. They became very popular after the institution by the Pope of the festival of Corpus Christi early in the fourteenth century. The sets of plays which were given separately at Christmas and Easter were now combined into one cycle performed on the occa-

sion. Their language now was English and the plays had an admixture of comic element to make them more entertaining. As the churchyards could not hold the growing crowds, the performance of the plays was taken over by the towns. As the Corpus Christi festival was celebrated with a 'pageant' or procession, these plays were given on moving platforms which themselves came to be called 'pageants'. They were not unlike the procession of moving platforms during the Ram Leela celebrations in India. The whole of the Scriptural story from the birth of Christ to his crucifixion and ascension was enacted in a cycle of plays called Miracles or Mysteries. (A distinction is sometimes made between 'mysteries' and 'miracles', the former denoting plays dealing with the life of Christ and the latter those dealing with the lives of the saints. This distinction is true of France, not of England, where all plays were indiscriminately called Miracles.)

The complete cycle of plays was spread over several days. Each guild or trade union of the town made itself responsible for the production of the play appropriate to it. For example, the play of the flood would be assigned to the guild of shipwrights, the adoration of the Magi, who presented the infant Christ with gold and jewellery, to the guild of goldsmiths, and so on.

The Miracles were well established by the fifteenth century and were very popular. Four cycles of these plays besides minor ones have been preserved. Named after their town they are: Cycles of York, Chester, Coventry and Wakefield (also called Townley plays after the family that owned them). The York collection, the biggest, consists of 48 plays.

These plays by unknown authors are written in stanzas of doggerel verse and are simple though crude in style. Here and there, however, one comes upon scenes both of extreme pathos and of humour. A good example of the pathetic is the play of *Abraham and Isaac*, in which Abraham offers to sacrifice his son Isaac. But the anonymous writers show the greatest originality in the interpolated scenes of humour. Two scenes in the Wakefield collection are the most amusing. The one shows the lively quarrel between Noah and his shrewish wife who has to be beaten into submission before the Ark can proceed. The other, in the Nativity play, is a farcical comedy. Mak steals a sheep belonging to the shepherds who are going to visit the baby Christ. A search follows and the sheep is discovered in a cradle in Mak's house. Mak's wife pretends to have been just delivered of a child. One of the shepherds thereupon proceeds to offer a present to the baby who is discovered to be no other than the stolen sheep.

Moralities

The second stage in the development of the drama was reached in moral plays or Moralities. These grew up side by side with the miracles in the fifteenth century. The earliest extant morality, the

Castle of Perseverance, dates back to early fifteenth century. (The Morality was a sort of allegory of human life showing man struggling between Good and Evil.) The characters were abstractions—personifications of virtues and vices. The early moralities like *Man-kind*, *Hickscorner* and others are awfully dull. The only exception is *Everyman* which is so good that it has been revived on the modern stage in both England and America. Everyman is summoned to God by Death. He seeks company and visits one after another, Fellowship (friends), Kindred (relations), and Goods (earthly possessions), but in vain. He at last remembers Good Deeds who willingly accompanies him. The moral is obvious.

Renaissance Drama

(With the advent of the Renaissance and the triumph of Protestantism the Miracles declined. The moralities, however, survived, and were used to reflect either humanism or the spirit of the reformed religion. In other words the moralities became either secular or religious. Skelton's *Magnificence* (1516), the earliest example of secular morality, was aimed at the extravagance of Henry VIII. Others to follow, of the same class, such as *The Four Elements* and *Wit and Science* stressed the importance of knowledge and denounced ignorance. The Reformers used morality to propagate their own views in such plays as Lyndsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* (1540) in Scotland, and Bishop Bale's *King John* (1547) in England.) The three estates, satirised by Lyndsay are the Clergy, the Nobility and the Citizens, the chief target being the Romish priests. Bale mixes history with his morality and in doing so falsifies history. John, the worst King of England, is shown as a great King who is maligned by the church because he had repudiated the Pope. This morality anticipates Shakespeare's *King John*.

(The secular morality took a long step forward when it developed into a kind of play called the Interlude, which is nothing but rudimentary comedy.

The most prolific writer of these interludes was John Heywood, a musician in the court of Henry VIII.) His aim was simply to amuse and not to moralise. His most famous interlude is *The Four Ps*, in which a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Potycary (apothecary or chemist) and a Pedlar dispute as to which of them could tell the biggest lie. The Palmer, naturally a much travelled man, says during all his travels he never once met a woman out of temper! The others agree that this is the prize-winning lie.

Heywood discarded the abstractions of the moralities and introduced in their place human characters taken from contemporary life. Further, by avoiding moralising and concentrating on pure amusement his 'new and very merry interludes' prepared the way for comedy.

CLASSICAL INFLUENCE ON THE DRAMA— THE FIRST COMEDY AND THE FIRST TRAGEDY

Though humanism had used the morality for its own purposes early in the sixteenth century, it was not till 1550 that the classics made their full impact upon English drama. The first English comedy was *Ralph Roister Doister* written by Nicholas Udall, headmaster of Eton. It was first acted about 1553.) It was modelled on the Latin comedy of Plautus and Terence and divided into five acts. It was not, however, pure imitation. Some of the characters are borrowed from the classics and others are taken straight from English life. Ralph, a foolish braggart, and Mathew Merrygreek, the mischievously funny servant, are stock characters of Latin comedy. Dame Constance, the 'heroine', (betrothed to Goodluck) and her two maids, are contemporary English types. The fun and laughter arise from Merrygreek's changing the punctuation of Ralph's love letter. Ralph is beaten and driven away by Constance and her maids. Goodluck estranged from his fiancée by false reports is reconciled to her. (The play is written in rhymed verse)

Another and even better comedy or rather farce, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, was produced a little later at Cambridge. There is nothing classical about it except its regular construction and division into acts and scenes. It is a farce of rustic English life. Gammer Gurton loses her needle which is supposed to have been stolen by a neighbour. The search that follows leads to noisy quarrels and the whole village is in an uproar until the dame's man, Hodge, screams and the needle is found sticking in his pants.

These two, historically important as they are, as the precursors of later English comedy, did not contribute much to the progress of the drama beyond separating the comic element from the serious, which in fact had already been done in Heywood's interludes. Real advance was made in the first tragedy, *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex*, acted in 1561 and written by two lawyers Sackville and Norton. The writers were inspired by the Roman tragedian Seneca, more a closet than a stage dramatist.) His tragedies are rhetorical and fit for declamation rather than acting on the stage. There is a Chorus who explains the theme of the play. There is very little action on the stage. All action takes place off the stage and is simply reported. The story is of unrelieved gloom, full of violent and monstrous crime, bloodshed and horror.) King Gorboduc abdicates in favour of his sons Ferrex and Porrex who immediately start a war. Ferrex, the elder is slain by Porrex who in his turn is killed by the mother in vengeance. The subjects rise in rebellion and kill the king and queen. This leads to civil war, anarchy, usurpation. The usurper is also killed, leaving the throne vacant. The author's aim was to depict the consequences of a disputed succession and thus indirectly to persuade Queen Elizabeth to marry and leave an heir. (The important thing to note about *Gorboduc*, however, is that it is the first play in English to be written in blank verse

under the influence of the classics. The oratorical manner of the Senecan tragedy did not suit the national genius and was rejected in favour of spectacular action, but the blank verse was adopted as the most suitable metre for the drama.)

(This advance, however, was not pursued immediately. It took about 25 years before effective use of blank verse was made in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1586). But in speaking of Kyd and Marlowe we are anticipating.) We have still to see what the state of drama was during the years 1550-1590. (It must not be supposed that the three plays referred to above and conventionally called the first comedy, the first farce, and the first tragedy were the only plays produced during these years.) There were others—hundreds of them—which testify to the intense dramatic activity of this period.) It was a time of experiment and the plays are impossible of classification as comedy, tragedy or historical play. They are a medley or mixture of two or more kinds—morality, interlude, history, romance, classical, tragedy, farce and what not—aiming at variety rather than unity. Variety has always been characteristic of English drama. Moreover, other influences besides the classical were also at work. These were imitations or adaptations of Spanish and Italian plays. These plays were written in all sorts of metres, mostly doggerel. Many of these plays have disappeared and such of them as have been preserved are of unknown authorship and uncertain date, making it impossible to trace the lines of development. To add to the confusion plays were often written in collaboration and old plays were being constantly refurbished to satisfy the craze for novelty. These transitional plays, the plays, in Saintsbury's phrase, of 'this twilight period' of English drama have no poetic or dramatic merit and are therefore of little practical importance except to the specialist. Their historical importance, however, is clear. They provided a field of exercise for the national dramatic genius, which made the great outburst of Elizabethan drama in Shakespeare and others possible.

(It was during this period of confusion, moreover, that the national theatre was born. The Reformed Church was hostile to the drama because of its early association with the Romish church and the ultra-Protestants or Puritans were much more so.) Professional players were regarded as rogues and vagabonds. In order to escape being so branded, they formed companies and attached themselves to this or that nobleman, e.g. the Earl of Leicester's 'servants' or the Lord Chamberlain's 'servants'. (Though opposed by the Puritans, the drama was very popular with the royalty, the nobility as well as the common people. Since the Puritans dominated the Corporation of London, no performances were permitted within the municipal limits. They shifted therefore beyond the City and the first theatre called simply the *Theatre* was built in 1576. Others followed on both banks of the Thames.)

The University Wits

Towards the close of this transitional period appear a group of highly gifted writers who at one bound, as it were, pulled the drama out of the sphere of childish experiment into that of art. The members of this group were all or almost all university-men and from a playful phrase applied to them at the time are known as 'University Wits'. They are John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nash, Kyd and Christopher Marlowe. They were the real founders of the great Elizabethan drama and the immediate predecessors as well as contemporaries of Shakespeare, who not only took many a hint from them but, as tradition has it, collaborated with some of them, notably Kyd and Marlowe.

Lyly who made his name with his *Euphues* belongs more to the history of prose than to that of drama. His plays in euphuistic prose, written for the entertainment of the court, are masque-like comedies on classical subjects—*Campaspe*, *Endymion*, *Love's Metamorphoses*, etc. The dramatic element in them is slight, but they are highly artistic with the charm of fancy, wit and satire far removed from the crudities of the earlier comedies. They prepared the way for Romantic comedy of Shakespeare.

Peele's plays show a great variety of subjects: classical, romantic, biblical, historical, *The Arraignment of Paris* is classical, *David & Bethsabe* (Bathsheba) biblical, *Edward I* historical and *The old Wive's Tale* romantic. He is no more dramatic than Lyly, but he is as charming in his verse as Lyly is in his prose. His blank verse, sweet and supple, is a distinct advance on that of *Gorboduc*.

Greene, Lodge and Nash form a more or less distinct group or sub-group of playwrights who wrote for the popular stage. Of these Greene alone is remarkable as a dramatist. In *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *James IV* he sketched charming pictures of pure, self-sacrificing women that anticipate the romantic heroines of Shakespeare—Rosalind, Viola, Imogen. Lodge and Nash were mediocre as dramatists, though they excelled in other fields. Both of them wrote poems, pamphlets and prose fiction. The student remembers Lodge as the writer of the novel *Rosalynd* which Shakespeare refashioned in *As You Like It*. Nash distinguished himself as a satirist.

Kyd and Marlowe. While all these made real contributions to the development of the drama, they did not supply thrilling action demanded by the public. This was supplied by Kyd and Marlowe. Whether Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* or Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* came first it is difficult to say; what is certain is that both made a hit about the same time 1586 or 1587. The *Spanish Tragedy* which outdoes Seneca as a 'horror' play was a sensation, and its popularity was not only immediate but lasted till the end of the century or even beyond. The literature of the time is full of references to it. Ben Jonson refers to it in his *Everyman in his Humour*.

The play is a sensational melodrama whose theme is revenge. It opens with the revelation made by the ghost of Don Andrea that he has been foully murdered by Balthazar and calling for revenge. This story forms the framework of the action that follows.

Horatio, son of Hieronimo, Marshal of Spain, comes to tell the Spanish princess Bellimperia how her fiancé Andrea has been treacherously murdered by Prince Balthazar. They fall instantly in love and make an appointment to meet at night in Hieronimo's garden. Their meeting is interrupted by the appearance of assassins who kill Horatio. Hieronimo and the princess vow vengeance on the murderers. In order to achieve his design the distracted father feigns madness and arranges the staging of a play at the wedding of Bellimperia who is forced to marry Balthazar, her lover's murderer. The play instead of being a mere play is played in right earnest and everyone of the wedding party is killed or kills himself. Other horrors follow including Heironimo's killing of the father of one of the murderers and also himself.

(This piling up of horror upon horror was the wine that intoxicated the audience. They cared nothing for the regular construction or the unities of classical drama. What they wanted was thrills and Kyd supplied them with a vengeance. The sensational plot with its ghost, intrigue, violence and bloodshed together with declamatory speeches established in general the content, as its powerful blank verse established the medium, of the romantic drama. Shakespeare indeed moderated the sensationalism of Kyd, but it remains true that it was the sensational plot of his tragedies that attracted contemporary audiences. Shakespeare took more than one hint from the *Spanish Tragedy* in his *Hamlet*. It is even possible, as most critics suggest, that he may have read an older *Hamlet*, now lost, written probably by Kyd.)

Marlowe (1564-93). The other purveyor of thrills on the stage, Marlowe, was the youngest of the University Wits and also the greatest of them all. Marlowe, son of a shoemaker of Canterbury was born in 1564. He was educated at the King's School Canterbury and at Cambridge. He was accused of atheism and lived the loose life of a Bohemian. He died as the result of a drunken brawl at the age of twenty nine. His major works are the four plays—*Tamburlaine*, *Dr. Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Edward II*. The minor works include two plays—*The Massacre at Paris*,¹ *Dido, Queen of Carthage*—and the non-dramatic poem *Hero and Leander*. (The heroes of the first three plays are each consumed by a burning passion which leads to their doom. In *Tamburlaine* this passion is thirst for power. Urged by the lust of conquest Tamburlaine—Taimur Lung or Taimur, the lame—the fourteenth century Tartar, ravages the whole of Asia. Students of Indian history will remember him as the man who massacred one lakh

¹Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 1572; a general massacre of French Protestants throughout France, on the festival of St. Bartholomew

prisoners in Delhi. Utterly contemptuous of human life and morality, this most blood-thirsty butcher of history until Hitler, has his chariot drawn by captive Kings lashed forward like horses. Marlowe shows him as a superman or demigod exulting over his victims and hurling defiance at God in declamatory blank verse speeches of a power never heard before.

In spite of its extravagances, the play pleased. The audiences treated to such spectacles and such speeches were dazzled, as no doubt Marlowe must have been by his success. His Taimur was only a projection of himself imbued with a like passion for power, glory and beauty. One forgets the rant and bombast of the barbarian when in their midst he utters this paean to Beauty:

If all the pens that ever poets held,
Had fed the feeling of their masters thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admired themes:
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
Wherein as in a mirror we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit—
If these had made one poem's period
All all combined in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads,
One thought, one grace, one wonder at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest:

Marlowe is his own hero and in this passage expresses the Renaissance artist's aspiration for the infinite.

(*Dr. Faustus* is the story of a man coming to grief by his unbridled thirst for knowledge and power. He sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for supreme knowledge and the power that knowledge gives, for 24 years. Dr. Faustus echoes Marlowe's own ambition for unlimited knowledge and power when he says:

All things that move between the quiet poles shall be at my command')

When to satisfy his desire for matchless beauty he calls up Helen of Troy, he is dazzled and utters the loveliest lines of the play, lines that have not been equalled, much less surpassed, even by Shakespeare:

'Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

At last the twenty four years are over and the time to pay the price has come. The clock strikes twelve and the devils drag him

to hell. His anguished cry of horror is drowned by thunder and lightning.

The play is inferior to *Tamburlaine*, but being free from its excesses and shorter is more popular today. It has some powerful passages of poetry, notably the Helen passage above referred to and that in the last scene of anguish before the doctor's approaching damnation. The similarity between Dr Faustus and Marlowe gives another interest to the play. The pathetic epilogue spoken by the Chorus on the terrible fate of Dr Faustus acquires additional piquancy when we remember the premature and sad end of the dramatist:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
That sometime grew within this learned man.

Marlowe had no sense of humour and the clowning scenes in the play are so bad that one wonders if they were written by him.

In *The Jew of Malta* the passion is greed of riches as well as hatred of enemies. The Jew, Barabas, is ruined by Christians, and in revenge he contrives incredible cruelties until he falls into a cauldron of boiling water which he had prepared to destroy his enemies. This is a real 'horror', play a fit match for *Tamburlaine*.

In *Edward II* Marlowe descends from these superhuman heights to reality and history. It is the first great historical play and pointed the way to *Richard II*, *King John* and other historical plays of Shakespeare. It is a real attempt at the interpretation of history, studies character, has dramatic qualities. Marlowe's usual lyrical eloquence shows itself in the speeches of the King and particularly in the great speech of Mortimer who 'as a traveller goes to discover countries yet unknown.' This lyricism, however, is restrained and is nothing like the outbursts in *Tamburlaine* and the *Jew of Malta*. And the murder of the King in prison is one of the most pathetic scenes in Elizabethan drama.

In any assessment of Marlowe, the fact of his early death must never be forgotten. Judging from the quality of the work he accomplished one can have little hesitation in saying that had he been granted the normal span of life he would have been a serious rival of Shakespeare. Even as it is, Shakespeare was indebted to him in more ways than one. The influence of Marlowe is evident in *Richard II*, *Richard III* and even in *King John*. As a dramatist, however, and only as a dramatist, he is far behind Shakespeare. He had neither the universality of Shakespeare nor his penetrating knowledge of human nature. He could not draw women and he had no sense of humour. His heroes are no men but giants or monsters and their actions and speeches extravagant, even absurd. But all these deficiencies and faults are carried off by his vehemence and the splendour of his poetry. He may be inferior to Shakespeare

as a dramatist, but as a poet and technician of blank verse, his 'mighty line', he is second to none. Shakespeare did not forget his master and paid the 'dead Shepherd' (poet) a handsome tribute when he made Phebe in *As You Like It* quote the line from *Hero and Leander*:

Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
Whoever loved, that loved not at first sight?

CHAPTER 14

SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare ; his life and character—The chronology of plays—A survey of the plays—Estimate of Shakespeare's genius—The Shakespeare 'Mystery'—Shakespeare's objectivity—His philosophy—The Elizabethan stage.

Life

Shakespeare was born on the 23rd of April 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon, a village in Warwickshire. His father was a prosperous grain dealer whose fortunes declined after sometime and Shakespeare who attended the local grammar school had to give up his studies at the age of 13 or 14 in order to help in the family business. He made a hasty marriage at eighteen, had three children—two daughters and a son. His wife, Anne Hathaway, was eight years his senior and it is probable his relations with her were not happy. There is a tradition that he was caught poaching deer and rabbits in Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlecote and was beaten up. This incident, it is supposed, drove him from his native village to seek his livelihood elsewhere. Be that as it may, he drifted to London in or about 1586 and remained cut off from home and family for about ten years. Little is known about his early life in London. He appears to have been attracted to the stage and is said to have begun as a holder of visitors' horses. Later he found employment as an actor and is said to have acted the Ghost in *Hamlet* and Adam in *As You Like It*, besides acting in the plays of Ben Jonson and others.

The first notice of Shakespeare as a dramatist occurs in Greene's pamphlet *A Groat'sworth of Wit* (1592). Green denounced him as "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as able to bumbast out a blank verse as the best of you, and being an absolute Johannes factotum is, in his own conceit, the only Shake-scene in a countrie." The reference in Greene's pamphlet is an adaptation of a line in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* (3): 'Oh Tiger's heart—Wrapped in a woman's hide' (Act 1.4.137).

Greene's attack was provoked by jealousy of Shakespeare's great popularity as a refashioner of old plays. (There were three plays on Henry VI (Parts 1, 2, 3) by other hands and these revised by Shakespeare had scored triumphant success on the stage earlier the same year (1592). Thus encouraged, Shakespeare began producing all kinds of plays then popular and soon became the most popular playwright of his day. The theatrical company to which he was attached at the time known as Earl of Leicester's players, later became Lord Chamberlain's, and finally after Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603, the King's servants. Shakespeare's company performed at various theatres—The Theatre, The Rose, The Curtain, etc.—before acquiring the famous Globe theatre built in 1599. As Shakespeare's prosperity grew, he became a part-owner of the Globe and Blackfriar's theatres with which the whole of his remaining professional career was identified.

(Shakespeare's dramatic career covers roughly a period of twenty years from 1591 to 1611. During this period he wrote 37 plays, besides two narrative love poems and a large number of sonnets.) The love poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) Shakespeare dedicated to the young and brilliant Earl of Southampton who must have rewarded him with a munificent gift. In any case he was introduced to the highest circles of the court, the nobility and scholars.

His son, Hamnet, died in August 1596 and Shakespeare was present at his burial at Stratford. From this time on he visited Stratford frequently and with his growing prosperity the financial position of his family improved. He persuaded his father to apply for a coat of arms which was granted. Thus, though not born a gentleman, he became one by inheritance. He bought in 1597 New Place, the largest house in Stratford. He bought other real estate in Stratford and in London. About 1611 he bade farewell to the stage and retired to Stratford where he lived the quiet life of a country gentleman till he died on 23 April 1616, of a fever contracted, it is said, from a bout of drinking with his guests, Ben Jonson and Drayton.

There is no contemporary biography of Shakespeare and what little we know about his life is the result of patient and industrious investigation of devoted scholars during the last three and a half centuries. Despite many controversial points, Sidney Lee's monumental *Life of Shakespeare* is the most authoritative source of information available to the student.

Plays

(The two love poems and the sonnets of Shakespeare have been considered elsewhere in this book. Beautiful as they are, they are mere effusions of youth and if Shakespeare had written nothing more, they alone could not have been the foundation of his lasting greatness. Luckily his dramatic instinct drew him to the stage where he was to win his laurels. The drama was at the time

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the most popular form of entertainment and the demand for plays so great that writers for the stage were driven to touching up old plays instead of writing new ones. It was also a common practice for playwrights to collaborate in revising an old play. Shakespeare who, as we have seen, began as a reviser of old plays seems to have thus collaborated with Marlowe and Kyd in such early plays as *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VI* and *Richard III.*)

The exact order in which Shakespeare's plays were written cannot be definitely determined. Only sixteen of his thirty-seven plays were published in quarto form during his life time with or without his approval. There being no copyright law, unscrupulous publishers employed agents to scribble in short hand a popular play as it was given on the stage, and printed this 'pirated' or stolen edition for profit. Even so the date of publication gives no clue to the date of composition, for plays were published after they had acquired popularity and often years after they were written. Shakespeare was singularly careless about publishing his plays and probably thought little of them as literature. It was in 1623 seven years after his death that two of his fellow-actors, Heminge and Condell, published the first collected edition of his plays now known as the First Folio "in order to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive." It contains all the plays except *Pericles* which was added in a later Folio. This famous first Folio, though full of printing mistakes, is the only authoritative edition of Shakespeare's complete plays we have.

A rough chronology of Shakespeare's plays has been worked out from external as well as internal evidence. External evidence consists of references to the plays in diaries and memoranda of contemporaries. The most important document of this kind is *Palladis Tamia, Wit's Treasury* (1598) by Francis Meres, a Cambridge scholar. In this volume Meres reviews all English authors since Chaucer upto his own day, comparing each with a corresponding writer in Greek, Latin or Italian. He includes Shakespeare among the great in lyric poetry, tragedy and comedy. He alludes to Shakespeare thus:

As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love's Labour Lost*, his *Love's Labour Wonne*, his *Midsummers Nightdream*, and his *Merchant of Venice*; for Tragedy his *Richard the II*, *Richard the III*, *Henry the IV*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Juliet*.

There is no play called *Love's Labour Wonne* and some ingenious critics have identified it with *All's Well that ends Well*. Be that as it may, Mere's list is conclusive evidence that these twelve plays had been produced by 1598, the date of *Palladis Tamia*. As pointed out by Sampson (*Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*) the list is selective, not exhaustive, for Mere's method is that of balancing numbers; he balances six comedies against six tragedies.

The internal evidence of the date of composition is provided by (a) topical allusions, i.e., allusions in the play to events of the day, (b) tone, and (c) metre.

These bases, however, enable us only to classify the plays as early, middle or late. They do not fix the exact dates of composition. Earlier plays or plays which belong to the experimental stage are characterised by youthful exuberance, excessive word-play and fantastic conceits. Their excessive light-heartedness marks them out as belonging to the period of Shakespeare's immaturity. Further, the blank verse of the earlier plays tends to be end-stopped, i.e. the sense ends with each line, and rhyming couplets are frequent. In later plays the blank verse is more flexible because the sense instead of ending with the line runs on to the next line so that the pause may occur anywhere in the line. In other words, end-stopped lines have been replaced by run-on lines which with their varied pauses make the blank verse responsive to every human mood or feeling. Besides, in the later plays there are progressively more and more of what are called weak or 'feminine' endings, i.e., additional unstressed syllables at the end of the line or in the middle. Moreover, rhymes become less frequent and in the latest plays almost disappear.

Dividing Shakespeare's dramatic career into three periods, early, middle and late, the plays may be grouped as follows:

1. **Early Period (1590-1596):** *Henry VI* (3 plays), *Richard III*, *Richard II*, *King John*. Comedies: *Love's Labour Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Tragedies: *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*.

2. **Middle Period (1596-1608):** Histories: *Henry IV* (two plays), *Henry V*. Comedies: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well that ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*. Tragedies: *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens* (only partly his)

3. **Late Period (1608-1613):** *Pericles* (finished by other writers) *Cymbeline*, *Winters Tale*, *The Tempest*, *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (both finished by other writers).

This classification, however rough or conjectural, helps us to understand the development of Shakespeare's genius through stages that are natural and normal. He did not descend from the heavens fully equipped, but had to learn his trade like any other craftsman before achieving mastery in it.

Criticism

Shakespeare is so overwhelmingly great that anything like an adequate treatment of him within the limits of a single chapter is simply impossible. Nor indeed is such a treatment necessary in a book like this. For one thing, the student is likely to know more

about Shakespeare than about any other writer. For another, there are excellent 'studies' in the dramatist, highly specialised as well as general, to which he must turn sooner or later for a sound appreciation of his genius. For these as well as other reasons I must be content to make a rapid survey of his plays and then to evaluate him in a few brief statements.

A Survey of the Plays

Comedies : (a) *Love's Labour Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. (b) *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*. (c) *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well that ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*.

(a) All in this group are boisterous and farcical comedies, bearing the marks of Shakespeare's 'prentice' work.

(b) In this group *The Merchant of Venice* is a rich mixture of several plots and is one of the most popular. Shakespeare's sympathetic treatment of Shylock must have made a great impression at a time when the Jews were not very popular. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare introduces us to the world of fairies with their king and queen and the roguish imp of folklore, Puck. The farce of Bottom all unconscious of his donkey's ears, in the arms of Titania, is heightened by poetry of rare delicacy in the latter's commands to her fairy attendants to provide comforts to her love. Bottom is one of the greatest comic creations of Shakespeares and the farcical interlude of Pyramus and Thisby presented by Bottom and his fellows at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta deservedly takes the cake in this play. It is also in this play that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Theseus his famous pronouncement on the art of poetry:

The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact.

(Act. V.1.)

Taming of the Shrew and *Merry Wives of Windsor* are middle-class comedies as distinguished from the rest of Shakespeare's comedies which are aristocratic, dealing as they do, with the affairs of the great kings and princes. Both are farcical. Shakespeare, it is said, wrote *Merry Wives* at the behest of Queen Elizabeth who desired to see Falstaff in love. Falstaff is overreached by the merry wives, is humbled, and accepts defeat much to the chagrin of some critics, who cannot bear to see their idol lick the dust.

(c) *Much Ado about Nothing*, though a tragi-comedy, is redeemed by the delightful wit-combats of Benedick and Beatrice on the one hand and by the blundering constables, Dogberry and Verges, on the other. *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are the funniest comedies of Shakespeare. *As You Like It* is a long picnic in the Forest of Arden where Rosalind and Touchstone provide rich

intellectual fare. *Twelfth Night* is, if anything, even more hilarious. Some hyper-sensitive critics bemoan the fate of Malvolio whose punishment they regard as too severe. They also think that in Malvolio Shakespeare was satirising Puritanism. So what? Is satire barred from Comedy? Then all great comic writers—Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence, Moliere, Ben Jonson—were guilty. But really Malvolio is conceived in the true spirit of comedy. Sir Toby's classic rebuke to Malvolio: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" will echo down the centuries in the hearts of all lovers of good living as a perfect silencer to kill-joy puritanism. And Sir Andrew who to use Priestley's¹ word, is 'dandled' by Shakespeare, is perhaps the most delightful simpleton in all literature. To top all, Feste's song: 'O mistress mine, where are you roaming?' is among the most lively lyrics in the English language.

Troilus and Cressida, *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure*, are only nominally comedies. They are mirthless and bitter. *Troilus*, in fact, has been classed by some as tragedy. *All's Well that ends Well* is of uncertain date and is supposed to be a recast of *Love's Labour Wonne* in Mere's list. In *Measure for Measure* occurs the famous song: 'Take, O take those lips away!'

Histories: *Henry VI* (1, 2, 3,) *Richard III*, *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV* (1, 2), *Henry V*—*Henry VIII*.

The three parts of *Henry VI* are revised versions of old plays presumably prepared in collaboration with Marlowe. *Richard III* is Marlowesque, and *Richard II* which followed soon after it also shows the influence of Marlowe's *Edward II*. The patriotic note which marks all Shakespeare's historical plays finds thunderous expression in this play in John of Gaunt's dying speech—

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,

(*Act II. 1.*)

King John ends on a similar note of high patriotism in the speech of the Bastard Falconbridge, the play's most interesting character

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself

(*Act. V.7*)

In the two parts of *Henry IV* Shakespeare achieves a combination of history and comedy not to be found elsewhere. In fact, history is overwhelmed by comedy which centres round Falstaff, the greatest comic character of Shakespeare. *Henry V* which followed is a

¹ J.B. Priestley, *English Comic Characters*

magnificent pageant of victories won by Shakespeare's ideal king and has always had a special patriotic appeal for the British.

The late *Henry VIII*, only a fragment of which was written by Shakespeare, was completed by others.

Tragedies: *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Timon of Athens*, *Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*.

Titus Andronicus, a horror play, is in the line of the *Spanish Tragedy* and may have been written in collaboration with others. With *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare achieved his first triumph in tragedy. As a tragedy of romantic love it has few parallels in world's literature. *Julius Caesar* may be considered the prelude to Shakespeare's great tragedies. Its style, grave and majestic, is quite in keeping with the theme of the tragedy. The tragedy is not so much the murder of Caesar, "the foremost man of all the world", as the defeat of Brutus, "the noblest of them all". It is the defeat of democratic idealism by dictatorship.

The great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*—are psychological tragedies or tragedies of character. Shakespeare follows the ancient aristocratic tradition in tragedy in that his heroes are all great men. Chaucer's monk before beginning his tale defines tragedy—

Tragedie is to seyn a certain storie
Of him that stood in great prosperitee,
And is fallen out of heigh degree
Into miserie, and endeth Wretchedly.

The hero's downfall is brought about by a fatal weakness in his own character. In *Hamlet* it is excessive refinement of sensibility, in *Othello* it is excessive simpleness of mind, in *Lear* it is excessive egoism and ungovernable temper, in *Macbeth* it is inordinate ambition, in *Antony* it is unbridled passion of love.

Timon of Athens, which is only partly Shakespeare's, is a tragedy of misanthropy. *Coriolanus*, though inferior to the great tragedies, is true to type and depicts the tragedy of excessive pride.

Last plays: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, *Tempest*. All these plays of Shakespeare's last period though containing a lot of tragic matter have happy endings. They are neither true tragedies nor true comedies. For want of a better name they are called Romances. Their tone is calm and tranquil in marked contrast with the furious violence of the great tragedies that preceded them. Their theme is forgiveness and reconciliation.

Pericles is not entirely Shakespeare's and was added to his plays in a later Folio. *Cymbeline* is notable for the character of Imogen, one of Shakespeare's greatest heroines. The play contains the beautiful funeral song: 'Fear no more the heat of the sun'. *Winter's Tale*, based on Greene's romance *Pandosto*, is unforgettable for the character of that charming rogue Autolycus, that 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles', and for the famous song:

Daffodils

That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.

(Act 4. 4)

The Tempest is commonly supposed to have been the last play of Shakespeare. But whether it was actually so or not, it was certainly *intended* to be his farewell to the stage. Prospero's farewell to his magic and his spirits leaves little doubt on this point.

Estimate of Shakespeare

Shakespeare has been so much written about, has been praised in such superlative terms, and has been analysed with such subtlety that one despairs of adding anything new. But the very wealth of Shakespearean criticism is apt to confuse the beginner. What he reads in one book is contradicted or cancelled by another. The reason is that Shakespeare excels in so many qualities that it is hard to pinpoint the one excellence which may be said to distinguish him from all other writers. We can express Lyly, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, each in a single formula. But Shakespeare can match Lyly in his enphuism, Marlowe in his Marlowesque bombast, and Ben Jonson in his 'humours'. Nor is this all. Not only is every quality in the work of his contemporaries and successors matched by Shakespeare, it is excelled by him. Whatever has been done by any other dramatist has been done better by Shakespeare. We may go even further and say that Shakespeare has done to perfection things that have never been attempted by any other dramatist.

How can we explain this greatness? Various answers have been given. The answer, however, that hits the nail on the head is that given by Dryden when he said that Shakespeare "was the man who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul." This was put more emphatically and in a nutshell when he referred to "Shakespeare's universal mind". It is this universality which explains Shakespeare's astonishing power of characterisation in which he is supreme. He was so completely human, had such wide sympathies, that he could enter into the minds of all sorts and conditions of human beings and portray them truthfully. The truth of Shakespeare's characters is different from the truth of the so-called realists of today. While they attempt to give the whole truth of a character and fail; Shakespeare, less ambitious, catches what is essential and permanent in human nature and succeeds.

Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist because he has created the largest number of living characters—characters, that is to say, who live not only on the stage but also off it. They grip our memory, and it is no mere figure of speech to say that we know them better than we know our intimate friends. We may remember one or two characters of other dramatists—Ben Jonson's Bobadil or Volpone, Marlowe's Tamerlane or the Jew, Webster's Duchess of Malphi. But

Shakespeare created a whole world and peopled it with figures that walk out of his pages to live in our imagination for ever. Whole books have been written on Falstaff and Hamlet as though they were historical characters. In Verona the guides show you Juliet's tomb, as also Juliet's house with the very balcony from where she talked to Romeo!

The partisans of Romeo are now planning to put up his statue in the heart of the city. What greater tribute could be paid to Shakespeare, the master illusionist of drama?

So far we have considered Shakespeare as a dramatist. But there is more to Shakespeare than the dramatist. His plays are not only great drama, they are also great literature. Shakespeare was the greatest poet not only of his age but of all time. No other dramatist has been also as great a poet. That is why Shakespeare's plays are read as literature in millions of homes all over the world.)

As a poet, Shakespeare was the lord of language. Together with his dramatic penetration, he possessed an unrivalled power of expression. Literature is memorable speech and no other writer has given us so many memorable speeches as Shakespeare. That is why Shakespeare is, outside the Bible, the most often quoted of all writers.

Defects

To accept Shakespeare's greatness is not to be blind to his defects. He would not be human if he were absolutely free from faults. Shakespeare was not a very careful writer. He wrote with great speed and often in a hurry. We have it on the authority of Heminge and Condell as well as that of Ben Jonson that he never blotted a line. He was writing for a stage that was hungry for plays, and Shakespeare met the demand as best he could. There are obvious marks of hurried writing in many of his plays. The conclusion of *As You Like It* is a glaring example. The resolution of the plot is effected by *deus ex machina* (god from the machine). A messenger arrives in the Forest of Arden and informs the exiled Duke that the usurper has become a hermit leaving the ducal throne to be reoccupied by its rightful occupant. Equally, if not more, unconvincing is Celia's marriage to Oliver. This is felt to be a big fly in the ointment. In Lodge's *Rosalind* Oliver saves Celia from bandits and this is good enough reason for their marriage. But Shakespeare in his hurry could not assimilate harmoniously the elements of the plot he had borrowed from Lodge. The same want of care is responsible for many anachronisms in his plays. That his geography was poor is shown by his giving a seacoast to Bohemia (*Winter's Tale*).

Shakespeare seems to have been lordly indifferent to these petty matters, which in any case would not be observed in the swift action on the stage. For it must never be forgotten that he was

writing his plays to be acted, not read. It is only in reading that we become aware of his little inconsistencies.

A more serious defect is his excessive word-play and forced wit which hardly raises a smile now. Maybe tastes have changed and Shakespeare was writing for an age less sophisticated than ours. And in any case Shakespeare had to keep the groundlings in mind, and perhaps they laughed at his inanities. It is certainly they that account for his occasional coarseness. We have all heard the chorus of joyous screaming and whistling from the low-priced stall in a cinema hall when a particularly 'Juicy' scene is flashed on the screen.

The lengthy declamations that are so frequent in Shakespeare's plays and sometimes so undramatic are also explained by the taste of the time. The audience wanted poetical declamations and Shakespeare's lyrical genius supplied them. Further, Shakespeare's stage had no painted scenery and declamations made up for this deficiency in spectacle.

In short, Shakespeare was writing for a particular stage and a particular audience. His main aim was to make money and his chief concern, therefore, was to please his audience. This audience was a mixed company representing all strata of society. Shakespeare had to appeal to all tastes. He gave poetry and pathos, subtle wit and humour, thought and reflection, for the refined; blood-and-thunder sensationalism for the unrefined; music and dance, love and romance for all. The trivial inconsistencies and petty crudities which arm-chair critics have picked out from his plays sink into insignificance before the astonishing variety of his excellences. The final impression after reading Shakespeare's plays is this one of unparalleled variety. Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra may be aptly applied to his plays : Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale/Her infinite variety.

The Shakespeare 'mystery': The puzzle that one man and that too a mere actor with no more than a perfunctory grammar school education should have produced within the space of twenty years about twice as many plays has led to crankish theories assigning the authorship of the plays to Bacon, Marlowe, or this or that peer of the realm. The theories are too crazy to be taken seriously and it is sufficient to say that all documentary evidence (such as title page and contemporary references) assigns the plays to William Shakespeare. There is really no mystery if we remember the fact that Shakespeare simply borrowed his plots and thus saved himself the bother of inventing them. There are only four plays which he wrote independently, for they cannot be traced to any originals. These are: *Love's Labour Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Tempest*. His originality consisted not in inventing plots but in turning the base metal of his borrowings into gold, in building ships out of matchsticks.

As regards his lack of university education, it proved an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Being a graduate of the streets,

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he was thrown upon his own resources without being biased by bookish knowledge. His training as an actor enabled him to know and meet the needs of the stage. He had thus the two basic qualifications of a dramatist: direct knowledge of human nature and practical knowledge of the stage. Given the necessary genius, there is really no 'mystery' of Shakespeare. The mystery is in the genius and genius cannot be explained.

Of the many Shakespearean theories, one that needs consideration even in this book is the theory of his objectivity. A widely held view of Shakespeare is that he was the most impersonal of artists and we can know nothing about his own view of life and art from his plays. When we say Shakespeare says this or that, we commit the fallacy of quotations. It is argued that the quotation represents the view of the particular character and not that of Shakespeare. Mathew Arnold's sonnet on Shakespeare: "Others abide our question - Thou art free" has reinforced this view, which has gained wide currency among general readers. But this is pushing the theory of Shakespeare's objectivity too far. According to this view Shakespeare was a god who held absolutely aloof from his characters. Such detachment or indifference on the part of a writer is simply impossible. Even a pamphlet bears the mark of its writer. It is inconceivable that a man should write thirty-seven plays without leaving the impress of his own personality upon them.

In strict theory a dramatist can never say anything in his own person. But in practice the dramatist can and does now and then make a character his mouthpiece. And this is what Shakespeare does in many of his plays. This is specially true of such plays as *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Who has not felt that it is not Hamlet but Shakespeare who is lecturing the actors on the art of acting? Who can doubt that it is not Theseus but Shakespeare who is defining poetry in the *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Who does not feel that Prospero's farewell to his magic is Shakespeare's own farewell to the stage?

Among other reasons for the great popularity of *Hamlet* is the feeling that here, if anywhere, Shakespeare has unburdened his soul. There are so many utterances in this play that are stamped as Shakespeare's. For example: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio/Than are dreamt of in your philosophy". "There's a divinity that shapes our ends/Rough-hew them, how we will." "There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrow."

The clowns of Shakespeare acquire special significance in this respect. They are not mere conventional appendages to the plays. They perform the function of a chorus, and in their foolish or fantastic utterances may be found some of the profoundest opinions of the poet. Touchstone in *As You Like It*, Feste in *Twelfth Night* and Stephano the drunken butler in *The Tempest*—all reflect Shakespeare's own criticism of life. Being an artist he does not preach directly, but gives his vision of life an artistic expression

through characters from whom we least expect it. The fool in *Lear*, one of the most pathetic characters in all Shakespeare, is a class by himself. His babblings are a running and hard-hitting commentary on Lear's folly and no doubt reflect Shakespeare's own feelings as they do ours.

I have dwelt at some length on this point not to deny Shakespeare's objectivity but only to show its limitations. Shakespeare is the most impersonal of dramatists, but he *does* now and then drop the mask to reveal himself. To apply the theory strictly would be unjust to Shakespeare as well as to his readers. Unjust to Shakespeare who was very human, unjust to his readers who would like to cherish the recorded thoughts and beliefs of the greatest of poets.

Shakespeare's Philosophy

To accept the autobiographical element here and there in Shakespeare's plays does not, however, justify our identifying him with a body of doctrines called his philosophy of life. Shakespeare left no such system. What passes as Shakespeare's wit and wisdom or philosophy is a collection of opinions and reflections appropriate to the characters who spoke them. They do not make any coherent or consistent system. On the other hand, they are contradictory and inconsistent. In *Lear*, for example, Kent says:

It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our condition.

This is contradicted in *Julius Caesar* where Cassius says:

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves that we are underlings.

The gems of wit and wisdom scattered in the plays are *ad hoc* judgements which are as various and conflicting as humanity itself. Shakespeare's wide-ranging sympathy encloses the whole of humanity. He is the least didactic of writers. He doesn't preach, he doesn't judge. He is content to hold the mirror up to nature. He understood human nature. And to understand is to forgive. He had universal charity. He recognised that

There is a soul of goodness in things evil,
Could men observingly distil it out.

(Henry V)

Elizabethan Stage

As Shakespeare's plays were written to be acted and acted on a particular stage, we should always have a mental picture of that stage (in many respects so unlike our own) while reading any of his plays.

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The Elizabethan theatre was a round or octagonal building enclosing a courtyard which was open to the sky. The stage was a rectangular platform projecting from one side into the courtyard. On the bare floor in front and on either side of this platform stood the common people or 'groundlings' who paid a penny or so for admission. The better class who paid more sat on seats in tiers of galleries running all round, one above the other, as in a modern circus, the uppermost being covered with a thatched roof slanting inward. The nobles and fashionable gallants sat on the stage itself and amused themselves by throwing orange peel and nutshells among the groundlings who surrounded them on three sides. The platform had a curtain across the middle, separating the front or outer stage from the back or inner stage. The latter could be exposed to view by simply drawing the curtain aside. The inner stage was used for scenes which took place in any interior, such as Desdemona's room, Lear's hovel or Prospero's cell. Above this was the actor's dressing room or 'tiring house' with windows opening on to a balcony for scenes which took place at an elevated spot, such as an upper room, the walls of a castle, etc. It was from this balcony that Juliet talked with Romeo.

The Elizabethan stage was a primitive affair as compared with our own. It had no front or 'drop' curtain, no painted scenery and only the most primitive of stage properties. Change of scene was announced by a written sign. These peculiarities of the Elizabethan stage had important bearings on Shakespeare's technique. The absence of painted scenery thus accounts for the large number of scenes in his plays. The staging of such a play for example as *Antony and Cleopatra* in its entirety on the modern stage would ruin the producer. That is why modern stage managers cut out many scenes and combine others to suit their limited resources in painted scenery.

The absence of the 'drop' curtain explains why so many Shakespearean scenes have tame endings or endings in the nature of an anti-climax. For example, to clear the stage the dead Polonius has to be dragged off by Hamlet in full view of the audience (The stage direction is : *Hamlet tugging in Polonius*). On the modern stage the curtain would come down at the right moment and Polonius would walk off unseen by the audience.

As regards the stage properties there was little beyond a few articles of furniture. Make-shift devices were resorted to for the sake of realism. A tree, for example, would do duty for a forest. Ben Jonson in his prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* ridicules the crude realism of the "three rusty swords" which represented "York and Lancaster's long jars" in Shakespeare's historical plays. These limitations of scenery and properties explain the long descriptive passages that occur frequently in Shakespeare's plays. In *Henry V* Shakespeare openly appeals for the imaginative cooperation of the audience "to eke out our imperfections with your thoughts".

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These and many other features of Shakespeare's plays become clear if we keep in mind the stage setting of his day. Take soliloquies, for example. It is absurd that anyone should go on talking to himself for ten or fifteen minutes. But there is no absurdity if we remember that no distance separated the actor from his audience which surrounded him on three sides and some of whom sat on the stage itself. The soliloquy was, therefore, a means by which the character shared his thoughts with the audience. Another notable feature of the Elizabethan stage was that female parts were taken by boys. The age was not yet ripe for women to appear on the stage. Actresses came on the stage only after the Restoration.

OTHER ELIZABETHAN DRAMATISTS

The term Elizabethan stretched to include Jacobean and Caroline dramatists—Ben Jonson and the 'humour' comedy—Estimate of Ben Jonson: his failure in tragedy, his success in comedy—Decline of the drama after Shakespeare—Chapman—Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday*—Middleton—Heywood's realistic tragedy—*A Woman Killed with Kindness*—Tournier—Webster's *White Devil* and the *Duchess of Malfi*—Beaumont and Fletcher: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *Philaster*—Massinger's *A New Way to Pay old Debts*—Ford and Shirley.

Shakespeare's greatness has so eclipsed his contemporaries and successors in drama that it is only by an effort that we remember them and their plays. Shakespeare is, as it were, the central sun round whom are grouped the others like so many stars hardly visible in his daylight. But some of these stars are brilliant enough and shine in their own light, if we forget the sun for a moment. As such they deserve a place in any literary history.)

The literary historian is, however, faced with the problem of chronology. For, some of these dramatists who were Shakespeare's contemporaries lived and continued to work long after he was dead, while others who were his successors worked in the reign of Charles I. They should, therefore, be properly called Jacobean or Caroline dramatists, but as the spirit that animates their plays is still, in the main, Elizabethan, it would be better to group them together and call them all Elizabethan. This would not only facilitate an uninterrupted study of the drama which is the most glorious achievement of the Elizabethan age, but would also enable the student to see this achievement in its right perspective. The term Elizabethan in this chapter is, therefore, stretched to include the Jacobean and Caroline period down to the closing of the theatres in 1642.

Though the total output of plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries and successors is very large and the quality of the best of them very high, only the briefest notice of them and their authors is possible here.

Ben Jonson (1573-1637). The greatest of the group of writers for the public theatre outside Shakespeare was Ben Jonson. As

Marlowe had been Shakespeare's greatest rival in his earlier career, so was Ben Jonson in his later. He had a varied and adventurous career. He was educated at the famous Westminster School and though he did not go up to the University, he was honoured by both the universities.) Starting as a bricklayer he passed to soldiering, then to acting on the stage and finally to play-writing. He killed a fellow actor and was branded for life on his left thumb. He was involved in bitter quarrels with other dramatists, notably Dekker and Marston, the latter being thrashed by him. For his share in the comedy *Eastward Ho!* which offended King James by its satire on the Scots, he suffered imprisonment along with his collaborators, Chapman and Marston, and came very near to having his ears and nose chopped off. He travelled on foot to Scotland where he visited the Scottish poet William Drummond of Hawthornden (near Edinburgh). Drummond's notes of this visit are the source of many details of his life and character that have come down to us. He wrote masques for the court and enjoyed the patronage of James who made him court-poet or poet laureate. (A masque is a short dramatic piece or interlude with elaborate scenery, music, dance, gods and goddesses. It developed into the later opera.) In his later life he was a sort of literary dictator like his more famous namesake of the 18th century. He died in poverty and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The short and simple epitaph on his tomb reads: O Rare BEN JONSON!

The character Drummond gives to Ben Jonson is not flattering and this is confirmed by his tempestuous life as well as by his plays. He was undoubtedly a great classical scholar, but was proud of his learning and contemptuous of those less learned. He was self-complacent, aggressive and arrogant. Despite all this he was capable of warm friendship. He gathered round him a crowd of admiring disciples known as the "sons" or "tribe of Ben", and his wit-combats with Shakespeare at the Mermaid Tavern have left a pleasing picture of his rough good nature.

Ben Jonson struck out a new line in drama. He had critical theories of his own to which he adhered strictly in practice. These theories led him to model his plays after classical patterns. He set himself as a reformer of the Elizabethan stage with whose romantic tradition he was wholly out of sympathy. Though he was friendly to Shakespeare and worshipped him 'this side idolatry' he cannot be said to have been his enthusiastic admirer. In fact, he was in many ways a complete antithesis of Shakespeare. Shakespeare did not theorise about his art and accepted the conditions of the stage as he found them. In writing he was a law unto himself and wrote as he pleased without caring for rule or authority. Ben Jonson conformed strictly to the rules of classical drama. He observed the 'unities' while Shakespeare flouted them. He kept tragedy and comedy rigidly apart instead of mixing them as Shakespeare did. He was scrupulously accurate in his historical facts and is never guilty as Shakespeare is, of anachronisms. His two tragedies *Sejanus* and *Catiline* were the result of elaborate reading and

research and are heavily documented, but have nothing to recommend themselves except their documentation. They are pedantic and dull.

In comedy he was more successful. In the prologue to *Everyman in his Humour* he attacked the romantic conventions of contemporary theatre and expounded his own theory of drama. Speaking of comedy he observes:

But deeds and language such as men do use,
And persons such as comedy would choose
When she would show an image of the times
And sport with human follies, not with crimes.

His comedies are accordingly realistic and with one exception ridicule the fads and follies of contemporary London. The exception is *Volpone* which deals not with fools but criminals. Volpone, his parasite Mosca and Voltare, the lawyer, are unmitigated rascals and hardly the stuff of comedy.

The best known comedies of Ben Jonson are *Everyman in his Humour*, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*.

The comedy which Ben Jonson created is known as the comedy of humour—humour not in its modern but medieval sense. It was supposed that everyman had four 'humours' or fluids in his body—choler, bile, phlegm, and blood. The preponderance of one of these gave a distinct twist or bias to a man's disposition. Choler made him choleric or irritable, bile melancholy or pessimistic, phlegm phlegmatic or slow and sluggish, and blood sanguine or lively and optimistic. Humour thus came to mean an idiosyncrasy, eccentricity or oddity of character. Ben Jonson seizes upon the characteristic 'humour' or eccentricity of a character and exaggerates it to the point of absurdity. This conception of character is illustrated in Ben Jonson's first comedy *Everyman in his Humour* which is the key to all his comic plays. We have here old Knowell whose humour is his excessive anxiety about his son's morals; Brainworm, the clever servant; Kiteley, the jealous husband; the town gull Matthew, a pretender to poetry; the country gull Stephen who affects the fashionable humour of melancholy and wants a stool to be melancholy upon; Downright whose humour is irascible bluntness; Bobadill the cowardly braggart; and Justice Clement, the merry magistrate. It will be seen that Ben Jonson gives to his characters significant or tell-tale names. This method of characterization makes the play resemble a morality with its personifications of virtues and vices. Each character becomes the embodiment of one quality to the exclusion of all others. This is the method of caricature and makes Jonson's characters lop-sided. Bobadill, the most entertaining of all, is the only character of Ben Jonson's that lives in the memory. Dickens used the same method, but working on the larger canvas of the novel and having broader human sympathies

was able to create well rounded characters that are as classic as Shakespeare's.

(The most delightful of Ben Jonson's comedies is *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*.) Morose is a rich old bachelor whose humour is his hatred of noise. He lives in a narrow street which cannot admit vehicular traffic. The floors are heavily carpeted to muffle the tread of the servants' feet draped in thick socks. The lock in the door and the hinges are oiled every day. The servants speak to the master by signs such as raising a leg or holding up a hand or finger. He dismisses a servant because of his noisy boots. He does not approve of his nephew Eugenie and to cut him off from inheritance decides to marry, if he can get a perfectly silent woman. Cutbeard, his barber, in league with Eugenie, finds such a woman in *Epicoene*. The marriage ceremony is performed by a parson who can hardly speak because of a bad cold. When the parson coughs after the ceremony, he is asked to give back five shillings of the fee paid to him. He saves it only by coughing more on Cutbeard's instructions and is thrust out of the house.

Immediately after the marriage the wife finds her tongue which she begins to use vigorously by scolding the husband and countermanding his orders. A party led by Eugene and his friends complete with a band now enters to celebrate the wedding. Horrified by the noise Morose escapes out of doors in his night caps to see if he can get a divorce in the law-courts. He is so frightened by the noise of wrangling lawyers there that he hastens back home. A friend undertakes to get the case decided in the house by calling a lawyer and a parson who are no other than Cutbeard and Otter, a sea captain, both, disguised. After lengthy and noisy argument with a lot of Latin thrown in, it is concluded there is no valid ground for divorce. In this predicament Eugenie offers to get his uncle rid of the woman if he allows him five hundred pounds a year during life and names him his heir after death. On Morose's agreeing to the terms Eugenie pulls off *Epicoene's* wig and other disguises to discover her a boy!

(Of the other comedies of Jonson, three—*Everyman out of his Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels* and *The Poetaster*—are tedious, being dominated by satire and self-praise. *Cynthia's Revels* is redeemed by the song: 'Queen and huntress, Chaste and fair', one of Jonson's most beautiful lyrics. The *Poetaster* dealing with the literary quarrels and rivalries of the day is a scathing satire on Marston and Dekker.

In pleasing contrast to these are *Eastward Ho!* and *Bartholomew Fair*. They are intensely realistic pictures of London life rendered in a vein of genial humour not typical of Jonson.

Though realism was the strong point of Ben Jonson, he was not without a delicate poetic vein as is evidenced by his unfinished pastoral drama, *The Sad Sheperd or A Tale of Robinhood*. Besides, the large number of masques he wrote contain delightful poetry. His song 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' is one of the most

famous lyrics in the language.

Estimate of Ben Jonson. Though Ben Jonson failed in his attempt to turn tragedy into classical channels, he did succeed in infusing classical spirit of realism in comedy. His contemporaries and successors continued to produce romantic tragedies but they were markedly influenced by Ben Jonson in their comedies, which are realistic portrayals of contemporary London. The one great value of his own comedies is the light they throw on the fashions, fads, and follies of Elizabethan England. Taken together they constitute a solid social history of the times. A play like *Everyman in his Humour* tells us more of how the Londoners of his day lived and talked than all the plays of Shakespeare. Shakespeare transcended local limits and in Ben Jonson's words 'was for all time'; he himself, however, was 'for an age'—his own.

[As a dramatist he had great originality or inventive power, technical skill, learning, wit, vigour of language. If he failed to produce memorable characters it was because his temper was essentially satirical.] Satire implies exaggeration and what is easier to exaggerate than an oddity or 'humour'? Satire is not barred from comedy, but Jonson is uniformly satirical. His excessive pre-occupation with censure led him to load his characters with 'humours' which make them 'types' rather than individuals. In this sense he is less realistic or classical than Shakespeare. He lacked the universal charity of Shakespeare who could sympathise even with his bad characters without in any way upsetting the moral norm. Besides, Jonson's plays are marred by egotism, pedantry and coarseness. He could not help an allusion to himself as a famous writer even in such a delightful play as *The Silent Woman*. He was a brilliant writer, and his plays are clever but not charming. Dryden summed up this general feeling about Ben Jonson when he said:

I admire him but I love Shakespeare.

Ben Jonson by his importance demanded and has received more space than can be given to the others. Though all of them cannot be called decadent, there is no doubt that the drama declined after Shakespeare. Lacking his genius, his charity and his essential morality, the dramatists catered to the low tastes of a frivolous audience by writing plays which are coarse, artificial and sensational. We have noted the coarseness of Ben Jonson; in his contemporaries and successors it becomes more pervasive. Some of them revelled in licentiousness and sensationalism for their own sake. The stage which the Puritans had always hated as immoral became in course of time definitely so, until the Puritan Parliament coming into power closed the theatres in 1642.

Chapman, made famous by Keats's sonnet as the translator of Homer, was rather a reflective and didactic poet than a dramatist. He completed Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and collaborated with

Jonson and Marston in *Eastward Ho!* Marston's plays are bitter and misanthropic in thought and extravagant in expression. In Ben Jonson's *Poetaster* he is given a purge which makes him vomit his learned and bombastic words.

Dekker was a loveable personality and had real gifts of a dramatist. He had, according to Lamb, poetry enough for anything' and his comedies of London life are more realistic than those of others just because he touches them with romance. In *Satiromastix* he hits back at Ben Jonson for his attack on him in the *Poetaster*. His most famous play *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600) is remarkable for its central character Simon Eyre, the shoemaker, who became the Lord Mayor of London. His cheerfulness, energy, generosity and, above all, his rich and varied vocabulary of abusive epithets leave a lasting impression in the reader's mind.

Rowland Lacy, the scapegrace nephew of the Earl of Lincoln and Rose, the daughter of Sir Roger Oteley, the Lord Mayor of London, are in love. Their marriage is opposed by their guardians on the ground of inequality of status. Rose is sent into the country and Lacy to the French wars. Lacy, however, returns to London without taking part in the war. Having learnt the craft of shoe-making in Germany, he disguises himself as a shoemaker and calling himself Hans takes service with Simon Eyre. With the money Lacy gives him Simon buys a ship's cargo at a bargain price and becomes immensely rich. He builds a hall for the apprentices and is elected Lord Mayor. He orders his apprentices to celebrate the occasion by singing and dancing at the out-going Lord Mayor's where he has been invited to dinner. At the party Rose recognises Hans as her own Lacy. Communication between the lovers is established through Rose's maid, Sybil. They elope to the house of Simon who promises help and they are married at the Savoy.

To keep a pledge Simon feasts all the shoemakers of London in the new hall. The King who attends the new Lord Mayor's dinner is so pleased with the eccentricities of Simon that at his intercession he pardons Lacy and knights him.

With the main plot is interwoven a delightful sub-plot in which Ralph an apprentice of Simon's is reunited to his wife Jane after returning lame from the French wars.

Middleton, though a voluminous writer, is much too sensational, cynical and indecent to deserve more than a passing notice. His satirical comedies of contemporary London (e.g. *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*) are intensely realistic and humorous and would be as pleasant as Dekker's if they were not so licentious and devoid of sentiment. The same power of giving an air of reality is shown in his tragedies, the greatest of which are *Women Beware Women* and *The Changeling*. His *Witch* is remembered more for its association with *Macbeth* than for its merit. *The Changeling*, a tragicomedy, is in its tragic part quite as powerful as any of Shakespeare's tragedies, but the comic pendant which has nothing to do with the main tragedy is worthless.

Heywood, the most prolific playwright of the age, is said to have had a hand or at least 'a finger' in more than two hundred plays of which about forty are still extant. Only one of these, however, is famous. This, *A Woman killed with Kindness* (1603), is a realistic tragedy of domestic life, a type which has only two others (*Arden of Feversham* and the *Yorkshire Tragedy*) in the entire field of Elizabethan drama. This is the pathetic story of a good wife who succumbs to temptation in a moment of weakness. The outraged husband punishes her with complete isolation but provides her with money, servants and all comforts. The repentant woman starves herself and is forgiven just before her death. Heywood's kindness and simple humanity shines through this play. Lamb described him as 'a sort of prose Shakespeare'.

Tourneur and Webster, generally mentioned together, wrote highly sensational tragedies dealing with the life of Renaissance Italy, notorious for voluptuous pleasure, vice and violence. Tourneur's two plays *The Revenger's Tragedy* and *The Atheist's Tragedy* are gloomy melodramas little read today. Webster's plays, however, are much superior. His *White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* for all their sensationalism display tragic power which is second only to Shakespeare's.

The White Devil (1608). The play is founded on Italian history and dramatises events that took place in the 1580s. The white devil is Vittoria Corombona, a famous courtesan of Rome. She is the wife of a poor gentleman, Camillo. Of her two brothers, Flaminio is the secretary of Brachiano, duke of Padua, and Marcello an attendant on Francisco, duke of Florence. Flaminio acts as a pander and helps Brachiano to seduce his sister. They contrive the death of Camillo and Isabella, wife of Brachiano and sister of Francisco. Vittoria is tried for murder and adultery. As there is no direct proof of murder, she is found guilty of adultery and confined in a house of convertites or a penitentiary for prostitutes. She is carried off from there and married to Brachiano. Flaminio quarrels with his innocent brother Marcello and kills him. Francisco avenges Isabella by poisoning Brachiano, and his accomplices kill Vittoria and Flaminio.

The play has some beautiful passages which recall Shakespeare. Cornelia's grief over the dead body of her son Marcello recalls Ophelia's distracted speeches, while her dirge 'Call for the robin-red-breast and the Wren' is one of the most beautiful things outside Shakespeare. Flaminio, the blackest scoundrel in the play, gives vent to some sentiments almost Baconian in their shrewdness. 'It is better to be fortunate than wise'. 'There's nothing of so infinite vexation/As man's own thought's'. But the palm for tragic dignity is carried off by Vittoria. In the trial scene she recalls Portia with her daring wit and noble bearing. At the end when the murderers propose to kill her waiting woman first, she rises to the heights of Cleopatra and says: 'You shall not kill her first; behold my breast/I will be waited on in death : my servant/shall never go before me'.

The Duchess of Malfi (1614). This play is based upon a story of Bandello's. The duchess a young, beautiful and high-minded widow secretly marries Antonio, her steward, in spite of the warning of her brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand, duke of Calabria, not to remarry. The ostensible reason for opposition to remarriage is the consideration for their royal Spanish blood, but the real motive is their desire to inherit her wealth. They plant Bosola, a former galley-slave, in her employment to spy upon her. The duchess becomes the mother of three children by Antonio. Bosola ferrets out the secret and reports to the brothers. The Duchess and Antonio decide to separate and flee. Antonio escapes with the eldest child but the Duchess is captured with her two children. She is confined in her palace and is subjected to prolonged mental tortures. Ferdinand visits her in the dark and under the pretext of shaking hands gives her the severed hand of a dead man. Then she is shown the artificial figures of Antonio and her children as dead. As a climax to these tortures madmen from a mental hospital are let loose upon her to drive her to despair. At last she is delivered from her misery when her tormentors strangle her and her two children. Ferdinand seeing her dead body is touched with remorse and utters the oft quoted line: 'Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle: She died young'.

Nemesis soon overtakes the culprits. Ferdinand becomes mad. Bosola frustrated in hopes of reward kills poor Antonio mistaking him for the cardinal. But the cardinal does not escape; Bosola kills him and is himself killed by the mad Ferdinand.

Beaumont and Fletcher. This famous pair whose joint work is the most voluminous of any of the major dramatists enjoyed great popularity in their own day and were still popular in the 19th century. They carried on, in the main, the romantic tradition of Shakespeare.

Their plays are distinguished for their exuberance, variety, poetic fancy, graceful language, smooth versification and high technical skill. These merits are, however, counter-balanced by their low ethical standards, artificial and unnatural sentiments and, above all, by their poor grasp of character. Not a single character of theirs is remembered. Though it is impossible to identify the separate contribution of the two, Fletcher is believed to have been the greater poet and Beaumont the greater technician. Fletcher's collaboration with Shakespeare in *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* has already been noticed. Of the plays he wrote singly the most popular is *The Faithful Shepherdess*, a pastoral drama of great poetic beauty. The joint work of Beaumont and Fletcher consists of fifty-two plays of which the most important are *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, *A King and No King*.

The Maid's Tragedy is striking but unconvincing as the writers have not been able to harmonize character, motive, and action. *A King and No King* brings in incestuous love between brother and sister which, even after the later revelation that they are not brother

and sister, leaves a bad taste in the mouth. The other two are more successful and may be read in any anthology of Elizabethan plays.

The Knight of the Burning Pestle (1609). This is a capital farce. It differs from the usual run-of-the-mill comedy in that two members of the audience assume the role of stage managers and interfere in the action. A Citizen (a grocer) and his wife leap on to the stage and insist that their apprentice Ralph be given a part to honour the grocers' trade. Ralph accordingly appears as the Knight of the Burning Pestle and performs various absurd adventures like those of Don Quixote. The main action which concerns the love of Jasper, a merchant's apprentice, for his master's daughter Luce, becomes a secondary affair and is halted at will to suit the whims of the two stage dictators. They make ridiculous comments on the action and order everybody about, even giving sweets to Ralph and the stage boy by way of appreciation and encouragement. They confuse the stage action with reality and help out Ralph from tight corners. When the Knight is threatened with arrest for failure to pay 12 shillings at the Bell Inn, they pay from their own pocket. When the Knight is departing from the court of Moldavia where he has been lavishly entertained, they give him a few shillings to enable him to tip the King's household including the Princess, who gets three pence to buy pins at Bumbo fair! The disarming simplicity of the Citizen and his wife and their mutual affection make a delightful picture of domestic felicity.

Philaster (1611). This is a tragi-comedy of the kind we find in *Cymbeline*. The King of Calabria (southern Italy) has usurped the kingdom of Sicily. Philaster, the rightful heir is loved by Arethusa, the usurper's daughter, who loathes Pharamond, the prince of Spain whom her father wants her to marry. For communication between them Philaster gives his handsome page Bellario to Arethusa. Bellario is no other than Euphrasias, the daughter of Dion, a Sicilian lord. Under the pretext of going on a pilgrimage she has assumed male disguise in order to serve Philaster whom she loves but cannot marry because the prince is above her class. Arethusa declining Pharamond's proposal to anticipate marriage rights, he finds solace in the arms of Megra, a court lady of easy virtue. They are caught in Pharamond's bed-room. Megra becomes furious and retaliates by accusing Arethusa of misconduct with Bellario. Dion who from patriotic motives does not want Philaster to marry the usurper's daughter, gives credence to the accusation and perjures himself by confirming it as an eye witness. Philaster mad with jealousy wounds the princess and Bellario and is taken prisoner. The city rebels in favour of Philaster and captures Pharamond. The rebellion forces the king to release Philaster who rescues Pharamond and restores peace. Bellario's identity being disclosed, Arethusa is cleared of the charge against her. She is united to Philaster whose kingdom is restored to him. Everybody is forgiven at the end, even Dion who had deliberately libelled an innocent lady and almost caused two murders.

Though coarse in parts, the play has passages of great poetic beauty. Here is one. Philaster believing that Bellario is guilty says:

Tell me, gentle boy,
Is she not paralleless? is not her breath
Sweet as Arabian winds when fruits are ripe?
Are not her breasts two liquid ivory balls?
Is she not a lasting mine of joy?

Massinger, Ford, and Shirley. These three, the later successors of Shakespeare, mark the end of the Elizabethan drama. Their work is artificial, imitative, and morally repulsive. They had talent of a sort, but little originality. They continued the tradition of their predecessors without adding anything new. If anything, they went farther down in pandering to the vulgar tastes of the court and the upper classes. The drama had thus become debased and decadent when the Puritan Parliament closed the theatres in 1642. When they opened again after the Restoration, the drama took on the altogether different spirit and form of the new era.

Philip Massinger, the ablest of the three wrote many plays, both tragedies and comedies, but is remembered chiefly for his comedy, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1633). Massinger seems to have been considerably influenced by Ben Jonson as this, his most famous play, testifies. Not only does he give, morality like, significant labels to his characters, he fashions his chief character Sir Giles Overreach on the model of Volpone. A heartless usurer, he is a criminal of the deepest dye and hardly a figure of comedy. His attorney, Marrall, as villainous as Mosca, is his accomplice in the nefarious plots of usury, extortion and fraud by which he has ruined whole families. He first cheats his nephew Wellborn out of his property and then turns him ignominiously out of his house. He is an unashamed cynic. To him 'friendship is a word'. He would be worldly wise, for the other wisdom that prescribes doing right to others he cares 'not an atom'. When friends and kinsmen are down on their luck, he would rather set his "feet on their heads" than lend his hand to help them. He gloats over the misery of the widows and orphans he has made destitute.

His ruling passion is to get a title for his daughter Margaret by marrying her to a lord. To achieve this objective he would stick at nothing. He even attempts to force Margaret to give herself to Lord Lovell before marriage. When she protests as a virgin, the wretch says: 'Virgin me no virgins! I must have you lose that name, or you lose me'. Over-reaching himself, he is hoisted with his own petard. Frustrated in his hopes he becomes a laughing stock and falls down raving mad, while Margaret is happily united to Tom Allworth, her real lover. The poetic justice meted out to the various characters, the ingenious plot, not to say the villain of the piece, however improbable, make it one of the most readable of the

later Elizabethan plays. The play is also surprisingly modern in its language.

With Ford the drama reaches the lowest depths of degradation. His play *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* has incest for its theme. The passionate love between brother and sister is shown with complacency, even sympathy. Beaumont and Fletcher who had treated the same subject in *A King and No King* had at least the decency to soften the shock at the end with the disclosure that the lovers were not brother and sister after all. Ford had no such compunction. It is real incest and seems to have fascinated him. Not content with this sickening perversity, he ends the play on a note of blood curdling horror. When the sister after becoming another man's wife refuses to give herself to the brother, he kills her and comes out with her heart on the point of his dagger.

Fitful flashes of poetry light up some scenes in Ford's plays which are on the whole gloomy and dull.

Shirley, the last and the least interesting of the decadents, was still writing when the theatres were closed. His realistic comedies portraying the manners and fashions of the upper classes form a link between the Elizabethan and Restoration drama. He is remembered by one lyric which closes one of his plays:

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things ;
There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings.

BOOK FIVE

THE PURITAN PERIOD—1603-1660

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The ascendancy of Puritans in the reigns of James I and Charles I—Quarrels between King and Parliament—Civil War and execution of Charles I—Cromwell and the Commonwealth—The tyranny of Puritan rule—Collapse of the Commonwealth after Cromwell—Restoration of monarchy.

On Elizabeth's death in 1603 King James VI of Scotland became also James I of England. A glance at the genealogical table will show that he had descended through the female line from Henry VIII, Elizabeth's grandfather in the male line. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was a Catholic and was first married to the Dauphin, heir apparent to the French throne. The Dauphin dying, Mary returned to Scotland. She was a great beauty and being still young married her cousin Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley. Darnley became jealous of an Italian musician, Rizzio, because of his intimacy with the queen and had him openly murdered. Encouraged by this rift between the queen and her husband, James Bothwell, an unscrupulous Scot, murdered Darnley and within three months of the murder the queen married the murderer. This conduct of the queen shocked the people who already hated her on account of her opposition to Presbyterianism, the national religion. Her mother, Mary of Guise, a French Catholic, had as Regent done her best to stem the tide of Reformation in Scotland but had failed. The queen succeeded no better. Her position becoming desperate, she sought shelter in England. There she was kept a close prisoner for nineteen years, but as she became the centre of Catholic plots against Elizabeth, the latter had no alternative but to have her beheaded.

Her infant son James, by Darnley, had been left behind in Scotland where he was brought up a Presbyterian. He occupied his mother's throne as James VI. As he was the only heir to the English throne after Elizabeth's death, he united the two crowns and became James I of England.

James though brought up in the Presbyterian religion had no difficulty in accepting Anglicanism, for both are Protestant. The troubles which started almost immediately after his accession and which plagued England for more than half a century arose over two issues : religion and the right of the King to raise money without the consent of Parliament. During Elizabeth's reign the principal opponents of the Reformed Church had been Catholics. In the new reign they made a desperate attempt to blow up the King and both houses of Parliament by hatching what is known as the Gunpowder plot (1605). The plot was, however, discovered in time and the conspirators were executed. The Puritans who had been comparatively quiet so far now took the lead and brought religious controversy to the forefront. They regarded the ceremonies in the church as Popish and wanted the king to abolish them. The King did not yield.

The foreign policy of James further alienated a large number of his subjects. He wished to be a peacemaker in Europe and with this purpose he attempted to arrange a match between his son Charles and the Infanta, eldest daughter of the King of Spain. The English hated Spain; they remembered the reign of 'bloody Mary' and the Spanish Armada. The princess, however, jilted Charles, who then married Henrietta Maria, daughter of the French King Louis XIII and sister of future Louis XIV. As she too was a Catholic, the marriage was no less distasteful to the people than the Spanish match which had fallen through; for, they feared that she might convert Charles or at any rate bring forth Catholic heirs to the English throne.

The second issue, that of money, led to a more bitter quarrel between King and Parliament. Though the Tudors had been despots, they had always treated Parliament with respect and carried it with them in all matters of national policy. James wanted to ignore Parliament and advanced the novel claim to rule by divine right. In other words, he held that Kings were the Viceroys of God, "the Lord's anointed", and it was a sin to disobey them. Thus James and after him Charles thought it beneath their dignity to consult Parliament. Parliament on its part was determined to maintain the Constitution according to which it alone had the power to grant money. James and Charles both tried to raise money by taxes without leave of Parliament. Matters came to a head early in the reign of Charles and he was forced to accept the *Petition of Right*, a document which declared that taxes not sanctioned by Parliament were illegal. It was a bitter pill for the King to swallow and it is not difficult to see why he hated Parliament. Having quarrelled with all the three Parliaments he called during the first four years of his reign, he decided to dispense with Parliament altogether and for 11 years from 1629 to 1640 Charles ruled without Parliament.

This period called The Eleven Years' Tyranny was marked by ruthless suppression of Parliamentary leaders and other opponents of the Government through farcical trials by special prerogative courts

like the Star Chamber and the Ecclesiastical Court of High Commission. To obtain money he adopted several illegal taxation measures which roused great resentment. In 1634 he imposed 'ship-money', a tax on coastal towns which was formerly paid in war-time in lieu of ships for defence. As it was imposed in peacetime, it roused great opposition. A puritan squire, John Hampden, refused to pay on the ground that it had not been sanctioned by Parliament. He was tried and condemned by the judges, who were afraid of the King.

The religious situation was aggravated by the appointment of Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud's High Church or pro-Catholic policy was in fact the real cause of the Civil War. He enforced ritual in churches and banned Puritan or non-conformist worship outside them. This the Puritans found intolerable and many migrated to America. Instigated by Laud the King imposed Anglican worship on the Scottish church. This inflamed the Scots who signed a 'Solemn League and Covenant' with God by which they pledged themselves to defend Presbyterianism. They rose in armed revolt and Scottish armies marched upon England. Thus threatened, Charles was compelled to call Parliament in order to raise money for troops to defend England.

The Parliament which Charles called in 1640 on the advice of his Chief Minister Strafford lasted only three weeks and is called the 'Short Parliament'. It refused the money wanted by the King and was summarily dismissed. But as the Scots had already marched into Yorkshire, Charles called Parliament again the same year. This is known as the 'Long Parliament', since it continued for nearly 20 years (1640-1660). It was this Parliament which saw the King beheaded. With the money granted by it Charles bribed the Scots out of the country. Under the leadership of Pym, Hampden, and Cromwell the Long Parliament annulled the illegal acts of the King, impeached and executed Laud and the Earl of Stafford, and abolished the much hated Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission.

What ultimately precipitated the Civil War was the hot-headedness of the King. Infuriated against Parliament he went down to the House of Commons (4 January 1642) to effect the illegal arrest of Pym, Hampden, and three others by main force. But having been warned beforehand they had escaped. The Parliament was now convinced that Charles could not be trusted and the issue had to be decided by arms. The King fled to the North and Civil War began. The Anglicans and Catholics who hated the Puritans rallied round the king. These royalists were called cavaliers (from cavalry), while the Puritan soldiers are called 'Roundheads' from their close-cropped hair. Parliament secured the help of Scotland by signing the "Covenant" to establish Presbyterianism in England. It is not necessary for us to go into details of the Civil War. It threw up heroes on both sides. The King was worthily supported by his nephew Prince Rupert and the Highland royalist Montrose, but they were defeated by Oliver Cromwell, the Parliamentary

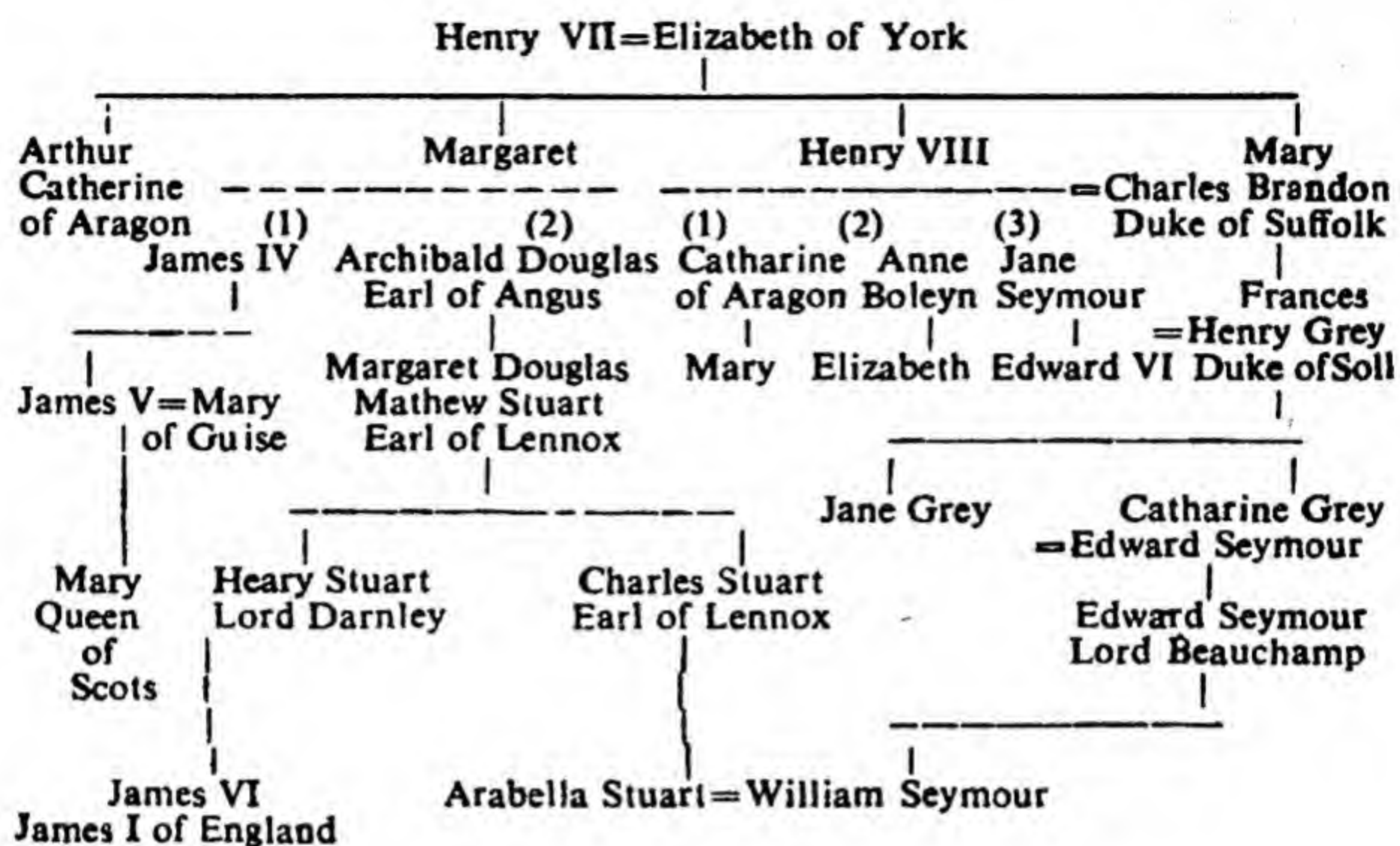
leader. The highlights of the war were the battles of Marston Moor (1644), Naseby (1645) and Preston (1648). Charles surrendered himself to the Scots who made him over to Parliament.

It is important to remember that the trial and execution of the King was the decision of Cromwell and his 'Independent' party. This Puritan sect, also called the Congregationalists, believed in freedom of churches and allowed all sects to worship as they pleased. Parliament, on the other hand, was composed mostly of Presbyterians who were for a uniform system of Presbyterianism and would not permit such toleration. Neither Parliament nor the people in general wanted the King's trial or execution. Cromwell, therefore, purged Parliament of its moderate Presbyterians and forced the truncated Parliament or 'Rump' as it came to be called, to bring the king to trial. He was condemned and his head cut off on 30 January 1649. The pathos of the beheading scene was heightened by the King's dignified bearing. The execution was looked upon as a murder and the King a martyr. But England was helpless and submitted to the rule of Cromwell and his army. It was different with Ireland and Scotland. Both rose in favour of the king's son, but were crushed by Cromwell. They were united to England in a Commonwealth. As the 'Rump' showed no inclination to dissolve, Cromwell dissolved it by force in 1653. Though he called several Parliaments after this, he did not get on with any of them. Weary of Parliaments he took over the reins of the government in his own hands and ruled as military dictator till his death in 1658. His son Richard Cromwell who took over was incompetent and for more than a year England faced a crisis until General Monk, who emerged as the most powerful leader of the Army, called a free Parliament. This, the Convention Parliament, declared for monarchy and in 1660 invited the beheaded king's son to the throne of England as Charles II.

Cromwell maintained peace and order at home and raised the prestige of England abroad. He organised the Navy which had been neglected by James and Charles, and with its help made England a great sea-power. The English fleet defeated the Dutch and wrested from Spain the island of Jamaica and several ships laden with treasure.

On the other side of the balance sheet, the Puritans made themselves odious by their bigotry, narrowness, austere living, and stern morality. In their attempt to make people good by force they closed the theatres and frowned upon dance, music, the arts, and other innocent pleasures. Ironically enough, the freedom fighters had themselves become tyrants. It is not surprising, therefore, that the people in general came to hate the Puritans intensely and were happy to get rid of their yoke.

THE TUDOR LINE



CHAPTER 16

THE PURITAN AGE : POETRY (1)

Puritan Age the best title for this period—Its literature not decadent except in drama—Three schools of poetry: Spenser's, Ben Jonson's, and Donne's—Spenserians: The Fletcher brothers—Browne and Wither—The loose Octosyllabic couplet and decadence in prosody—Ben Jonson and the Cavalier poets: Herrick, Carew, Suckling, Lovelace, Marvell—Their pagan and hedonistic spirit—Marvell the most attractive poet of the age, Herrick the most popular—Donne and the Metaphysical poets—Donne's obscurity and his modern revival—Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Traherne—The meaning of Metaphysical—The pioneers of classicism: Cowley, Denham, and Waller—The tight heroic couplet and the dawn of the Neo-classic Age

No single political title fits the period of English literature from the death of Elizabeth to the Restoration, in as much as it covers the reigns of James I and Charles I as well as the Commonwealth period. As its literature is dominated by the giant figure of Milton, it is convenient as well as appropriate to call it the age of Milton or the Puritan age. This literature is an extension of the Elizabethan and is really part of the Great Elizabethan Age. The term 'decadent' is sometimes applied to it, but it is hardly justified. If it is applied at all, it is subject to such large reservations that it is rendered nugatory. The drama certainly declined, tragedy degenerating into 'horror' plays and comedy into the trivial and coarse. Whether or not it deserved this fate, the drama came to an end with the closing of the theatres in 1642. In poetry the decline is discernible only in the metaphysical school, though it is largely counterbalanced by the achievements of the cavalier poets, to say nothing of those of Milton. In prose the performance of this period is even greater than that of Elizabethan age proper. As against Lyly, Bacon and Hooker, we have the Authorised Version of the Bible and such magnificent prose writers as Burton, Jeremy Taylor, Thomas Browne and Milton himself.

Though not decadent, the literature of the period nevertheless has characteristics which correspond to the middle age of a man's life. The spirit is the same, but it has lost some of its youthful vigour. The exuberant imagination of the Elizabethan age proper

which had, in the full tide of Renaissance, overflowed in spontaneous, reckless abundance, gave place to learning, deliberation and melancholy reflection. As inspiration waned, its place was supplied by intellectuality, imitation and exaggeration. The very defects of the Elizabethans came to be recognised as excellences to be imitated. This is exemplified in the artificiality, exaggeration, and obscurity in Donne and his metaphysical school.

Another factor which influenced literature in this period was the disunity of the country. The struggle between King and Parliament destroyed the unity of the nation which had been held together by Queen Elizabeth. This division of the country into two hostile camps is reflected in literature. Instead of being national it became partisan; so we have Cavalier poets and Roundhead poets.

Poetry. We have seen how the dramatists of this period followed either Shakespeare or Ben Jonson. The poets, however, had the choice, not of two but three masters: Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Donne. The influence of Spenser was supreme during the reign of James and came almost to an end at his death, surviving only in Milton. Ben Jonson and Donne influenced the poets of Caroline (so called from the Latin for Charles) and Commonwealth periods. The Spenserians are descriptive while the schools of Ben Jonson and Donne are lyrical.

Spenserians

Giles Fletcher, Phineas Fletcher, William Browne, George Wither. The brothers Giles and Phineas Fletcher (cousins of John Fletcher, the dramatist) were both Cambridge men and pastors. They acknowledged Spenser as their master and wrote long allegorical poems in modified Spenserian stanzas. Giles's *Christ's Victory and Triumph* (1610) anticipates Milton's epic in its matter, though in manner it is a brilliant imitation of Spenser. Phineas Fletcher's *Purple Island* is a much longer but prosy allegory of the human body.

The other pair, Browne and Wither, were Oxford men and friends who had strong affinities with Spenser, though they did not use his stanza. They wrote in couplets, mostly octosyllabic, with sentences running on beyond the second line, so that the rhymes get lost in a rapid flow of verse. Such run-on or enjambed couplets tend to excessive facility, looseness and volubility. In short poems enjambment does not much matter, but in a long poem such as Chamberlayne's narrative romance *Pharonnida* (1659) it leads to incoherence. This is a special feature of the poets of the Caroline period who write in couplets and is regarded as a mark of decadence in prosody. The pioneers of the classical age, Denham and Waller, condemned this loose variety of couplet and produced their own and correct smooth couplets.

Both Browne and Wither wrote delightful pastoral poems which link them up with the Lake poets. With their genuine feeling for nature and the countryside, their ornate, pictorial and sensuous presentation of it, and their fluent music, they anticipate Keats.

This pictorial sweetness is more marked in Wither, though because he was a Puritan, he was for a long time abused and neglected. Because of their facility in couplets both wrote voluminously, but are readable only in selections. Nobody today could read with patience Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* which owes its fame more to the title than to any intrinsic merit. He is remembered specially for the Syrens' song: "Steer, hither steer your winged pines" from his *Inner Temple Masque* and for his epitaph on Sidney's sister. Wither is remembered for such songs as 'Shall I, wasting in despair/Die because a woman's fair', *The Choice* in which he praises the Rose, and the pretty and moving *A Widow's Hymn*.

The Schools of Ben Jonson and Donne

The important thing to notice in the poetry of the Caroline period is the predominance of the lyric. With the exception of Milton's epic there are no great poems. There were, of course, ambitious poets who designed poems on the epic scale, such as D'Avenant's *Gondibert* (1650), Cowley's *Dravideis* (1656), and Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida* (1659); but they were failures. So the charm of the poetry of this period lies in its lyrics. This is no departure from the Elizabethan tradition whose inspiration was essentially lyrical. Spenser, indeed, did not practise the lyric to any large extent, though he wrote a large body of sonnets which are also a class of the lyric. The Elizabethan lyrics, we have seen, were issued in collections of the type of *Tottel's Miscellany*. Though such collections continued in the seventeenth century, the practice of poets' issuing their productions separately became more common. The lyric in their hands becomes frank and realistic. The fantastic idealism of the Petrarchan tradition gives place to sober realism. Not that the Caroline lyric is without the Elizabethan conceit. The conceit is there but the lyric on the whole is simpler, clearer, smoother and more graceful.

The lyric writers fall into two groups according as they followed Ben Jonson or Donne. In some cases the same poet combines the elements of both masters and it is futile trying to disentangle them. Generally speaking the writers of secular lyrics—Cavalier lyrists as they are called—owe their inspiration to Ben Jonson and the writers of religious lyrics, called the Metaphysical lyrists, owe theirs to Donne.

Ben Jonson and Cavalier Lyrists

Ben Jonson though more famous as a dramatist was also a writer of charming lyrics. Being devoted to classics he followed the patterns of Horace, Virgil, Catullus and other writers of antiquity. He loved order and regularity in form and simplicity and clarity in sense. Though a classicist, he was not without romantic feeling which breaks out now and then, in his famous song 'Drink to me only with thine eyes/And I will pledge with mine'. He loved simplicity and did not approve of excessive adornment: 'Still to be neat, still to be drest/As you were going to a feast'. His classical

restraint and careful craftsmanship exerted a healthy influence on his followers, the Cavalier lyricists. Their lyrics are simple, clear and graceful, avoiding the extremes of over-ornaments of Spenser on the one hand and the tortured wit and obscurity of Donne on the other. In spirit they are pagan and express the hedonistic philosophy of 'eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die'. So they sing of wine, women, and song.

Herrick, Carew, Suckling, Lovelace

The greatest and most popular of the Cavalier lyricists was Herrick. He was a Cambridge M.A. who after a riotous youth took orders when he was nearly forty. He was deprived of his living when Parliament won but was reinstated after the Restoration. His fame depends on secular poems which appeared in the collection called *Hesperides*. This also contained some divine poems or *Noble Numbers*. The poems are simplicity itself, their excellence consisting in dainty phrasing. The burden of the poems is the brevity of human life and its joys. So why delay? Pluck the flower before it dies—

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

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His most famous poem is *Corinna's going a-Maying*. Here is the last stanza—

Come, let us go, while we are in our prime,
And take the harmless folly of the time!
We shall grow old apace, and die
Before we know our liberty.
Our life is short, and our days run
As fast away as does the sun.
And as a vapour or a drop of rain,
Once lost, can ne'er be found again.
So when you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drown'd with us in endless night.
Then, while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, Come, let's go a-Maying.

Carew, though in the main a 'son' of Ben like Herrick, shows the influence of Donne in some of his extravagant conceits. A typical courtier, he was a refined, dashing libertine with a taste and talents for poetry. His poems show meticulous craftsmanship and are highly polished and elegant. He is now remembered chiefly for some of his songs two of which are famous—

He that loves a rosy cheek,
Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek

Fuel to maintain his fires:
 As old Time makes these decay,
 So his flame must waste away.
 Ask me no more where Jove bestows
 When June is past, the fading rose;
 For in you beauty's orient deep
 These flowers, in their causes, sleep.

Mark the subtlety of the metaphysical conceit in the second song.

Suckling and Lovelace are mentioned together because of the similarity of their circumstances as well as of the fate that overtook them. Both were staunch royalists and ruined themselves in the royalist cause. Both were very rich, brilliant and witty. Suckling was a spendthrift and libertine while Lovelace was remarkable for the beauty of his person and virtue. Both had a turn for poetry, but neither of them was a careful poet. Suckling's love poems are full of fun and frivolity. For example—

Out upon it, I have loved
 Three whole days together!
 And am like to love three more,
 If it prove fair weather.
 Quit, quit for shame ! This will not move:
 This cannot take her.
 If of herself she will not love,
 Nothing can make her:
 The devil take her !

Lovelace, though as unequal as Suckling, has won immortality by a couple of short pieces which are as serious and sincere as Suckling's are frivolous and conventional. One is *To Lucasta, going to the wars*—

Yet this inconstancy is such
 As thou shalt adore ;
 I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
 Loved I not Honour more.

The other is the well-known poem he wrote in prison:

Stone walls do not a prison make,
 Nor iron bars a cage ;
 Minds innocent and quiet take
 That for an hermitage.

Andrew Marvell should ordinarily be classed with Milton as a Puritan poet. He was Milton's assistant as Latin Secretary in the Cromwell Government, was a great admirer of the dictator and remained inflexibly opposed to the Government after the Restoration. But curiously enough his verse is anything but Puritanical. As a poet he was in sympathy with the opposite party and exhibits the best qualities of the Cavalier poets. His poetry combines the clarity and grace of Ben Jonson with the metaphysical wit of Donne. This is best shown in his poem *To His Coy Mistress*. Using metaphysical hyperboles he argues:

Your Coyness, dear Lady, would be all right if we had
 All the time in the world. I could go on loving and you refusing
 For thousands upon thousands of years. I would praise your
 eyes a hundred years, your breasts two hundred years, each,
 And your other parts thirty thousand years.

But, alas! Time marches fast—

But at my back I always hear
 Time's winged chariot hurrying near:
 And Yonder all before us lie
 Deserts of vast eternity.
 Thy beauty shall no more be found,
 Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
 My echoing song: then worms shall try
 That long preserved virginity,
 And your quaint honour turn to dust
 And into ashes all my lust:
 The grave's a fine and private place,
 But none, I think, do these embrace

Mark the humorous realism of the last two lines coming after a
 burst of eloquence—a characteristically 'metaphysical' device.
 Marvell's frankly sensuous enjoyment of nature, reminiscent of
 Keats, is best seen in his *Thoughts in a Garden*—

What wondrous life in this I lead!
 Ripe apples drop about my head;
 The luscious clusters of the vine
 Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
 The nectarine and curious peach
 Into my hands themselves do reach;
 Stumbling on melons, as I pass,
 Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

In his *Horation Ode* on Cromwell he stops to pay a tribute to
 Charles I, his victim—

He nothing common did or mean
 Upon that memorable scene;
 But with his keener eye
 The axe's edge did try.

Who would expect such gentlemanly charity from a political
 opponent? These lines, I believe, have done more to endear Marvell
 to his readers than anything else. If Milton is the greatest and
 Herrick the most popular, Marvell is the most attractive poet of
 the age.

Donne and the Metaphysical School of Poetry

Even more powerful than Ben Jonson's was the influence of John
 Donne (1573-1631). Wild and dissipated in his youth Donne took
 orders late in life and rose to be Dean of St. Paul's, a devout
 churchman and a great preacher of sermons. His early poems are
 outspokenly erotic and sensual and were published only after his
 death, though they had been in private circulation in MS. His

divine poems are equally passionate in expressing his complex and deep religious emotion.

Donne was a rebel in poetry. Impatient of convention he revolted against the whole Spenserian tradition in matter as well as in manner. He despised not only its allegory, pastoralism, and romantic chivalry, but also its over-rich style and smooth versification. He thought Spenser's chivalric or platonic love a humbug and decided to treat love as a physical appetite honestly and realistically. And as he did not like Spenser's heavily brocaded language and the monotonous music of his stanza, he deliberately adopted a colloquial language and rough and crabbed metre.

He was undoubtedly possessed of great poetic gifts but aiming at originality he achieved only novelty. There are passages of great and grave beauty both in his love poems and in his divine poems, but usually they are imbedded in a bog of philosophical disquisition of such subtlety that the reader's head begins to reel as he follows him through the twists and turns of the argument. It was this habit of philosophising, of leading a subject into strange, dim and unexpected vistas of thought that earned him the title of 'metaphysical'. A good example is the poem *Ecstasy*. The ecstasy of union of two souls in love is a simple enough idea, but it is tortured into such ethereal shapes that only a reader gifted with a special sixth sense can grasp them.)

(The key to Donne's poetry, say the critics, lies in a peculiar make-up of his personality. He was intensely, even violently passionate, and was at the same time given to intense and melancholy meditation. This blend of passion and thought, this integrated sensibility, they maintain, is the distinguishing quality of Donne's poetry.) But this sensibility is not peculiar to Donne. Poetic sensibility is a complex thing, a compound of thought and feeling. No poet's sensibility is either emotion alone or thought alone. Thought and feeling are inextricably mixed, though their proportion may vary according to the subject or the mood of the poet. The true explanation of Donne's puzzle seems to be that when the thought element in him takes over, it carries him off his feet. This uncontrolled thought leads to rhapsody and raving. Add to this the further fact that he had something of the exhibitionist in him. This led him to disgusting realism in his portrayal of love and to extravagant hyperboles and preposterous conceits in his philosophical speculations. In one of his poems he describes with relish the details of his going to bed with his mistress. In another, he threatens to visit his disdainful mistress as a ghost after his death. This apparition will witness the shameful discomfiture of the woman trying in vain to wake up her new lover so that she may have 'more'. All these things are in bad taste and show a putrid, not a poetic mind.

(The only poems in which he shows real tenderness are those addressed to his wife. In others his attitude to woman is brutally cynical. His mandrake song, famous for its fantasticism, is a good illustration of this.)



Go and catch a falling star,
Get with child a mandrake root,
Tell me where all past years are,
Or who cleft the Devil's foot;

"Even when a man has travelled far and wide and seen all such wondrous sights, he will not be able to report that there 'lives a woman true and fair'."

Unsavoury realism, hyperboles and fantasticism do not exhaust Donne's devices to arrest attention. He employs many others. Abrupt transition from one extreme to the other, juxtaposition of the trivial and the sublime, of the colloquial and the grandiloquent, are a few of these. A line like—'For Godsake hold your tongue and let me love'—is a stunt, not poetry.

His divine poems follow the same pattern with this difference that in them the passion is that of religious exaltation. The longer poems are insufferably taxing; even of the shorter pieces only one or two like 'Death, be not proud', 'Batter my heart, three person'd God' are found in anthologies.

The harshness of his metres is also deliberate, for as some of his poems show, he was capable of melodious versification. But he did not always choose to be melodious. The harsh metre of his satires is understandable for it accentuates their coarseness. But in other poems the harshness was due either to indolence or to eccentricity. Ben Jonson who admired him for many things said that 'for not keeping of accent Donne deserved hanging' and that he would be forgotten because of his obscurity. He was indeed forgotten and nobody cared for him during the 18th and 19th centuries. But today he is again in favour and is appearing in expensive editions. Impatient of traditional poetic values, the moderns headed by T.S. Eliot have found in Donne a kindred spirit. His very defects are lauded as virtues. This is, however, a passing phase and the latest trends presage a return to established poetic norms.

The Metaphysical Poets

The newness of Donne's poetry strongly appealed to the tastes of the time and for a whole generation from 1630 to 1660 the metaphysical style was widely if not universally practised. We have seen how even the secular Cavalier poets who called themselves 'sons' of Ben were not without traces of Donne's influence. The direct descendants of Donne, however, were the religious poets—Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan and Traherne.

In this group of religious metaphysicals, George Herbert is the central figure. His humility, self effacement, simple piety, and perfect Christian charity find plain, direct, and harmonious expression in the collection of his poems called *The Temple*. His metaphysical conceits are well controlled and easy to follow. He has neither the brilliance of Crashaw, nor the depth of Vaughan but

is on that account, perhaps, more successful than both as a religious poet. His poems *The Pulley* and *Love* which may be read in any anthology are enough to illustrate the quiet, soothing quality of Herbert's poetry.

Crashaw, a Catholic poet, is nearest to Donne in fantastic conceits. He is the most brilliant of this group, but his hyperboles border on the fatuous and the absurd. The eyes of St. Mary Magdalene in the poem *The Weeper* are "walking baths, compendious oceans". Their tears are "the cream of the milky way", etc. His Hymn to St. Teresa, however, is the most explosive effusion of devotional passion in all English religious poetry. Most of his verse is religious, but some of his best poems are secular. The most interesting of these is his whimsical *Wishes to his supposed Mistress*!

Vaughan, more of a mystic than any other of this group, has deeper thought, but is not very artistic in expression. The best of him is illustrated in such poems as *The Retreat* in which he anticipates Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*—"Happy those early days, when I shin'd in my Angel-infancy"—and *Friends Departed*: "They are all gone into the world of light!/And I alone sit lingering here."

Traherne, whose work was discovered only at the beginning of the present century, is a minor Vaughan, both in his mysticism and in his reminiscences of childhood.

The meaning of Metaphysical. Before taking our leave of the Metaphysical school a word must be said about the term itself. It was first used for Donne by Dryden and was later applied to him and his school by Dr Johnson in his discussion of Cowley. The term has reference to the hairsplitting subtlety of Donne's philosophical reasoning. Critics have tried to explain its precise meaning, but Dr Johnson's explanation is the best. The Metaphysical poets, according to him, "were men of learning and to show their learning was their whole endeavour. . . . They copied neither nature nor life. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perversity of industry they were ever found."

The Pioneers of Classicism—Cowley, Denham and Waller

The affectations, eccentricities, and fantasticism of Donne and his Metaphysical school provoked a reaction which led to the classicism of the next age. Ben Jonson in fact was the real founder of the classical school, but probably because he lacked smoothness, the honour of ushering in the new age was assigned by the rising generation to a set of three poets of the mid-seventeenth century: Cowley, Denham, and Waller. These poets are regarded as a link between the old and the new, between the Renaissance and the classical age. They are the precursors or pioneers of the new age of Dryden and Pope.

Cowley. Dr. Johnson began his *Lives of the Poets* with Abraham Cowley as the last of the metaphysicals and the first of the moderns. Leaving his earlier imitations of Donne's subtleties and conceits, Cowley turned more and more towards classicism and became a fervent admirer of Bacon and the Royal Society as embodiments of reason and understanding. He was an ambitious poet. He wrote an unsuccessful religious epic *Davideis*, irregular Pindaric odes as well as many love poems and occasional verse. In all, his distinguishing quality is brilliant wit rather than force of passion or imagination. Being a rather poor versifier his verses are not very melodious. Despite these drawbacks, quite a few of his poems are dainty and graceful. Their pointed wit makes them memorable. In his poem *Drinking* he argues that since everything in nature drinks—the earth, the plants, the sun, the moon, the stars—why shouldn't he?

Nothing in Nature's sober found,
But an eternal health goes round.
Fill up the bowl, then, fill it high,
Fill all the glasses there—for why
Should every creature drink but I?
Why, man of morals, tell me why?

In *The Epicure* he says, it's no use showering flowers, wines and precious ointments on the monuments of the dead. He would have all these now while he is still alive.

Crown me with roses while I live,
Now your wines and ointments give:
After death I nothing crave,
Let me alive my pleasures have:
All are Stoics in the grave.

In *The Wish* he seeks the solitude of woods and fields, away from the buzzing crowds of the city. But he concludes:

I should have then this only fear:
Lest men, when they my pleasures see,
Should hither throng to live like me,
And so make a city here.

Cowley was regarded as the greatest poet of his day. But his fame declined after a time and Dryden said that "though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer." This unfortunate remark has prejudiced all subsequent criticism of Cowley. Critics pass over him as a poet of little account. This is unjust. Cowley remains a great poet, as Dryden justly remarked. His qualifying tag must be understood to have been added in a particular context. Good writing according to the tastes of the times meant smoothness and elegance in versification and this Dryden found wanting in Cowley. So in spite of his affinities with the classicists Cowley was not regarded as their pioneer. This honour was conferred on Denham and Waller.

Denham (1615-69). Pope sang of Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness. Denham owes his fame to his poem *Cooper's Hill* (1642). It is a description of a place near the Thames, with many historical memories. The description is interspersed with moral and literary reflections the most famous of which adopted as their motto by the classists is contained in these four lines:

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream.
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage; without o'er flowing, full.

The balanced structure of the couplet together with the antithetical style gives to the poem a neatness and regularity of form far removed from the wilful or careless laxity of the metaphysicals.

Edmund Waller (1606-87). The other pioneer of classicism Edmund Waller was a writer of occasional verse. His sweetness which impressed Pope consists in his well-tuned couplets, each of which is a complete sentence. He said he found English verse wanting in smoothness, and set himself the task of supplying it. He supplied it abundantly in miscellaneous poems the most famous of which are his love poems *On a Girdle*; *Go, Lovely Rose*; and one on *Old Age*. Though the theme of the love poems is conventional, they are pretty and graceful. It is the poem on *Old Age*, however, which is the best and appealed most to men of the new generation. Here is its second and last stanza—

The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd
Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made :
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view.
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

According to Dryden the beauty of rhyme was "never fully known till Mr Waller taught it; he first made writing easily an art, first showed us to conclude the sense, most commonly in a distich." The new age cared for smoothness and correctness of form rather than originality or inspiration. Denham and Waller gave what it demanded. The new literature was called classical, but it was classical only on the side of restraint, the one thing needed at the time to curb the exuberant fancy of Spenser on the one hand and the exaggerated eccentricity of Donne on the other. The Age of Reason had arrived.

CHAPTER 17

THE PURITAN AGE : POETRY (2)

Milton's life--The earlier poems : *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, *Lycidas*—Sonnets—The later works : *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes*—Characteristics of Milton's poetry.

MILTON

Life. John Milton (1608-74) was born in London on 9 December 1608. His father was a lawyer-cum-banker in easy circumstances and though a Puritan was a lover of art and literature, and was besides a noted musician. There can be no doubt that the young Milton inherited his love of music from his father who spared no pains or expense in the boy's training. He was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. Because of his personal beauty, flowing hair and a prudish aloofness from the riotous life of the undergraduates, he was called the 'Lady of Christ's'. Being of a rebellious temper he was in trouble with the authorities over the curriculum, and was rusticated for a time. He however, took his B.A. in 1629 and M.A. in 1632.

While at Cambridge he composed many Latin and Italian poems, but the only remarkable English poem of this period is his *Ode on Christ's Nativity*. He refused to be ordained a minister of the Church of England, as that meant for him mental slavery and restraint upon liberty of conscience. So he went to live at Horton, a place near London, where his father had bought a property. Here he settled down to a life of hard study in order to prepare himself for writing a great poem, "which posterity would not willingly let die". To this period belong his earlier poems the twin pieces *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*; the two masques : *Arcades* and *Comus*; and the famous elegy *Lycidas*.

In 1638 he left on a tour of the Continent and spent most of his time in Italy where his proficiency in Latin and Italian won him many friends. While he was preparing to proceed to Sicily and Greece he received disturbing news from England. The struggle between King and Parliament had come to a head and Milton decided to hurry home for, as he says, "I thought it base to be travelling for

amusement abroad while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home." Having returned to London after fifteen months in August 1639, he first kept school teaching his two nephews (sister's sons) John and Edward Phillips and other pupils. The result of his experience as a schoolmaster was his tract on Education. This was a secondary interest, however, for he threw himself heart and soul into political and religious controversy and pressed all his learning into the service of the Parliamentary cause.

(During twenty years 1640-1660 he was a journalist writing prose pamphlets. He wrote no poetry during this period except a few sonnets.) On the establishment of the Commonwealth he was appointed Latin Secretary to the department of Foreign Affairs, which office he held till the restoration of monarchy. In 1643 he married Mary Powell, a seventeen year girl, daughter of an Oxford Royalist, but the marriage was an unhappy one. The philosophical seclusion and Puritan austerity of the Milton household must have bored the gay cavalier's daughter to death, and she left him shortly after the marriage. The aggrieved Milton wrote tracts pleading for a change in the divorce laws. The divorce laws were not changed, but his wife returned after two years and Milton was not only reconciled to her but sheltered her family when it was in trouble after the ruin of the Royalist cause. Though their relations were not happy, Mary Powell bore him three daughters. These daughters are alleged to have distressed Milton by their unfilial conduct, for they are said to have refused to read to him or take down his dictation of *Paradise Lost*.

The highlight of Milton's secretaryship was his controversy with Salmasius, a French scholar, then a Professor at the university of Leyden, Holland. Salmasius was commissioned by Charles II to write a defence of his father and an indictment of the regicide Government. To this defence of the king Milton replied with his *Defence of the English People*. The controversy became hot and furious and Milton whose eyesight had been failing for sometime now became totally blind (1652). He continued his work, however, with the help of Andrew Marvell and other assistants. His enemies took his calamity as God's judgment, but Milton accepted it with dignity and fortitude which is reflected in his sonnet on "His Blindness."

In the meanwhile, his wife having died, he married a second time in 1656. His second wife, Catherine Woodcock, died within fifteen months. She is the 'late espoused saint' of his sonnet. With the return of monarchy Milton lost his post and was arrested. By the intervention of powerful friends, however, he was released. He lost some of his property, but it is not clear whether it was confiscated or destroyed by the great fire of London (1666). Undaunted, Milton resumed his private studies and set himself to realising the aspiration of his youth for writing an immortal epic poem. We do not know when it was begun, but *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667. Before this Milton had married a third time, and his third

wife Elizabeth Minshull survived him for over half a century. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were published together in 1671. The poet died on 8 November, 1674.

For much of the information about Milton and his family we are indebted to his nephews John and Edward Phillips. His brother Christopher Milton became a Catholic and a judge in the reign of James II. This is interesting, for Milton's father had been disinherited for becoming a Protestant. (Milton was never an orthodox Puritan. He was tolerant enough to live on good terms with a Royalist father-in-law and Catholic brother. He had moved away from Presbyterians because of their intolerance of other sects and was latterly more allied to Independents who ultimately got control over the Parliament and established the Republic. But he was not so liberal as to tolerate those who did not believe in the Bible as a divinely revealed book. In his later life he became an Arian and did not believe in the divinity of Christ. In personal character he was as lofty as his verse. He was not insensitive to the charms of women or the joys of wine, but he deliberately kept aloof from such pleasures, believing that they were unworthy of a man destined, as he himself was, for a great poetic mission. He was an incurable idealist and to the end of his life never understood human nature in the raw. He had seen men only through the mirror of books and thought they were angels. Proud, self-centred, and humourless, he believed he could reform man and regenerate England by preaching from a lofty tower. He lived to see his labour wasted and the causes he espoused defeated. The poor material reward he received for his great epic was perhaps symbolic of its fate. For, *Paradise Lost* today is read, if at all, more for its music than for its message.

Milton's Poetry. Milton's work falls naturally into four well-marked periods: (1) the Cambridge period which closes in 1632, (2) the Horton period from 1632 to 1638, (3) the Journalistic period from 1640 to 1660, and (4) the last period of his greatest poetic achievement.

Cambridge Period. Besides some English poems, Milton wrote many poems in Latin and Italian, which can now be read in English translations. They are interesting exercises of a promising but immature genius. The most remarkable of these is his English Ode on Christ's Nativity. It is an excellent performance for a young man of 21, but is hardly worth the extravagant praise lavished upon it by some enthusiasts. It speaks well of Milton's devotion to the person of the infant Christ, but is marred by exaggeration and conceits in Donne's manner.

Horton Period. Leaving aside the insignificant masque *Arcades*, the four pieces of this period are the most delightful of Milton's poetry. Had Milton written nothing else, his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Comus* and *Lycidas* would have been enough to place him in the front rank of English poets. The twin poems *L'Allegro* and

Il Penseroso are Italian in title but English in spirit. They present contrasted pictures of the scholarly Milton first in his gayer and then in his graver mood. Written in tripping octosyllabic couplets, their haunting music is a permanent possession. *L'Allegro* (the cheerful man) revels in—

Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.

Or he spies a castle—

Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

At night he takes his delight in the theatre —

Then to the well-trod stage anon;
If Jonson's learned Sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

Il Penseroso (the pensive or thoughtful man) portrays Milton much more closely—

Or let my lamp at midnight hour,
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may often cut-watch the Bear,
With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.

He too visits the play-house, but unlike *L'Allegro*, to see tragedy—

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops line
Or the tale of Troy divine.

Further comment on these companion poems is useless. They are universally admired. Even Dr Johnson found them irresistible.

Comus was presented at Ludlow castle in 1634 in honour of the Earl of Bridgewater on his appointment as Governor of Wales. Milton called it simply 'A mask' and the title subsequently given to it is rather misleading, for it suggests that Comus, the villain of the piece, is its hero. It has been criticised for its lack of dramatic interest, but the criticism is irrelevant. The dramatic element in a masque is subordinate to spectacle and music. In *Comus* even the

spectacle is not so important as songs and speeches. Further, *Comus* is different from other masques in that it is frankly didactic. It is in fact a poem which celebrates the triumph of virtue, specially chastity. It would be hard to find an English poem which gives moral instruction with greater art.

A young lady and her two brothers lose their way in a forest at night. The brothers leave their sister to go in search of a guide. The lady falls into the trap of Comus (a pagan god invented by Milton), son of Circe the enchantress and Bacchus the god of wine. Like his mother he tempts travellers to drink a magic potion which turns their faces into those of beasts. The brothers warned by the Attendant Spirit arrive and rout Comus and his rabble. The lady who armed with the power of chastity had successfully resisted the enchanter's temptation is, however, still a captive in the enchanted chair. The Attendant Spirit invokes Sabrina, the goddess of the river Severn, who releases the lady. The Spirit thanks the goddess in a hymn, after which the lady and her brothers return to Ludlow castle.

The only really dramatic scene is the one between Comus and the lady. Milton who was so deficient in dramatic gift has nevertheless portrayed the character of Comus most realistically. If all of us, argues the enchanter, decided only to eat pulse, drink water and wear coarse cloth, we would 'live like Nature's bastards, not her sons'. Besides, Nature would be strangled with her own superfluous abundance. What is beauty meant for if not to be used? 'Beauty is Nature's coin, must not be hoarded/But must be current.... It is for homely to keep home'. Never was the sensualist's case argued more brilliantly. Which shows that Milton understood the Devil better than his own fellow-beings. This is confirmed by the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

This, however, is the negative side. On the positive side the power and beauty of the piece lies in its lyrical part—its songs and speeches. Two of the most exquisite songs are the 'Echo' song sung by the lady and the invocation to Sabrina sung by the Spirit. The elder brother's speeches are declamatory, not dramatic, but they express most eloquently Milton's mystical faith in the power of chastity.

He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day,
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun ;
Himself his own dungeon.

"Virtue may be assailed," he says later "but never hurt." But evil will recoil on itself, "self-fed and self-consumed". And "if this fail/The pillar'd firmament is rottenness/And earth's base built upon stubble."

The opening speech of the Attendant Spirit in majestic blank verse is as lofty in tone as anything in *Paradise Lost*, while his final

exhortation in the Epilogue is a fitting conclusion to this holy poem—

Mortals that would follow me,
Love virtue, she alone is free,
She can teach you how to climb,
Higher than the Sphery chime ;
Or if virtue feeble were,
Heav'n itself would stoop to her.

Lycidas is an elegy on a fellow student of Milton's, Edward King, who was drowned while on his way to Ireland. The form is that of the traditional pastoral elegy in which one shepherd mourns the death of another. King was intended for the Church and the thought that such a promising young career should be cut short makes Milton think of himself. He wonders whether it would not have been better for him to enjoy himself like others than to engage in incessant toil to achieve fame as a great poet, for

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days ;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
And slits the thin spun life.

But he is consoled with the thought that the real reward for one's labour is given by God, not by men.

After this personal digression comes the procession of mourners of whom St. Peter is one. The thought of the Church fills Milton with anger and disgust which are expressed in St. Peter's outburst against the corrupt clergy. What a pity, he says, that a sincere and talented young man like King should die, and self-indulgent and mercenary priests should "creep and intrude and climb into the fold." But Nemesis, he prophesies, is near at hand and will overtake them.

After this political digression Milton returns to the pastoral strain. No mourning, he says, will bring back *Lycidas*. He has his place in Heaven and the best thing for the poet is to take up the burden of life — 'Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new.'

The greatness of this poem lies neither in its grief which is mild, nor in its autobiography which is incidental, but in its exquisite melody. Dr Johnson denounced its versification as harsh and crude. His ears were attuned only to the heroic couplet and his blundering and prejudiced criticism is to be ignored. Here there are neither couplets nor stanzas. The basic line is decasyllabic, but it is broken at will into shorter lines of varying length and pauses. There are rhyming lines as well as unrhymed ones. It is a kind of free verse whose scheme is guided only by the poet's ear. It is a continuous stream of music, a harmonious blending of varied

notes and word sounds. A good example of Milton's exploitation of word music is furnished by the famous lines—

Or whether thou to our moist vows deny'd
Sleep'st by the fable of *Bellerus* old
Where the great vision of the guarded Mount
Looks toward *Namocos* and *Bayona's* hold.

We enjoy the music of the mouth-filling words *Bellerus*, *Namocos* and *Bayona* even when we don't know who or what they are. Tennyson put the whole thing in a nutshell when he remarked that '*Lycidas* is the touchstone of poetic taste'. This short poem of 200 lines is among the most precious gems of English poetry.

To the objection that *Lycidas* is not an expression of intense personal grief, the answer is that King was not an intimate friend of Milton and *Lycidas* was only his formal contribution to the collection of many obituary verses written by King's friends on the occasion.

The criticism that the poem is more about Milton than about King loses all point when we remember that egocentricity is characteristic of all Milton's poetry. Milton is the hero of all his works. We may take him or leave him.

Critics who take exception to Milton's attack on the hireling clergy are on stronger ground. That Milton, the Puritan controversialist, should make his appearance for the first time in a professed elegy does seem odd. It certainly doesn't add to the beauty of the poem.

Dr Johnson's charge that the poem is artificial because of its pastoral convention is too silly to be taken seriously. Milton was simply following a well established artistic precedent—a precedent that has given us Arnold's *Thyrsis* and Shelley's *Adonais*.

The Journalistic Period : Sonnets. To this period of 20 years (1640-60) belong Milton's prose pamphlets which are considered elsewhere and a few sonnets. The sonnets are Italian in form and occasional in subject, e.g. on his attaining 23rd year, the Assault on London, on his second wife, on his blindness, on the Massacre in Piedmont—the last two being the most famous. Unlike the Elizabethans he did not write love sonnets. Milton's sonnets are as individual as his other works. They are original, lofty in thought, learned and high-sounding. As Wordsworth said the sonnet in Milton's hand 'became a trumpet'.

The Last Period. In this period when he was totally blind Milton produced the two epics *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

Paradise Lost. A detailed criticism of *Paradise Lost* is not possible here. A few general remarks should suffice. It is the greatest epic in the English language unsurpassed for sublimity of thought and sustained grandeur of style and diction. The organ music of *Paradise Lost* is due principally to its blank verse. By

skilfully varying the pauses in the decasyllabic line Milton has built up verse paragraphs of incomparable majesty. Except in a few Elizabethan poems blank verse had been used only by the dramatists and it had come to be regarded as the standard medium of dramatic expression. Milton showed its potentialities in poetry and since then blank verse has been used as the normal vehicle of serious poetry. Next in importance to blank verse is Milton's poetic diction, his choice of high sounding and musical words. Another feature of this poem is its wealth of learned allusions, specially classical. As it is a Christian poem, classical mythology has been used only for comparison and not as part of its substance.

Despite its greatness *Paradise Lost* is little read. It is not in any sense a popular poem. Even in the Universities where Milton is a 'must', it is only the first two books of *Paradise Lost* that are usually prescribed for study. It is not difficult to see why this should be so. For one thing, the subject of the poem—the Fall of Man—is not inviting. Whatever appeal such a subject might have had in Milton's time it no longer attracts the modern reader. For another, its dogmatic theology is out of date. In the cold light of modern thought few even among the devout would accept the literal word of the Bible or Milton's interpretation of it. Dr Johnson, a merciless critic of Milton, made an exception of *Paradise Lost* and considered it more sympathetically than his other works. But even he, devout man as he was, praises it half-heartedly. He refrained from censuring the poem from religious and patriotic motives. For to 'lessen the reputation of Milton', he says, might 'diminish in some degree the honour of our country'.

Such extra-literary considerations, however, do not deter a modern critic from speaking frankly. Even granting the validity of Milton's faith, one has to say that such beliefs as are acceptable are already part of Christian heritage and acquire neither freshness nor novelty from Milton's presentation. On the contrary Milton involves himself in so many contradictions and inconsistencies. That there should be a war between God and his Angels is ridiculous enough. But that He who could smash his opponents in the twinkling of an eye should have to make anxious preparations to meet the enemy's challenge is simply absurd. Then, if God was so solicitous for his new creation, Man, why did he suffer the Devil to tempt him and then punish him and his descendants? To show His mercy and love after the fall, He promises redemption if somebody can be found to take the guilty Adam's sin upon himself and die for him so that justice may be satisfied. The whole proceeding is so unjust and the accompanying arguments are so fallacious that one wonders how Milton could square all this with his own belief or feel that he had succeeded in justifying the ways of God to man. These are serious defects, but the most serious defect of the poem is its lack of human interest. Adam and Eve are the only human characters and they, as Dr Johnson pointed out, 'are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know'.

The question who is the hero of the poem has exercised many critics. Obviously Man was designed to be the hero. But is he? Quite unconsciously Milton has exalted Satan to that position. In the words of Blake 'Milton was of the Devil's party without knowing it'. The Devil is the most impressive character in the poem. All other characters are tame beside him. It is his speeches that are so often quoted—

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven,
Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.
Who overcomes/By force, hath overcome but half his foe.

The truth is that Milton found in Satan, the arch rebel, an ideal mouthpiece for his own revolutionary spirit. Quite unconsciously God was to him the tyrannical king of England against whom he himself had raised the standard of revolt. Milton was supremely egoistic and had no dramatic gifts. He could not draw any character outside of himself. And the one character with whom he found himself in sympathy was Satan to whom he imparted his own intelligence, invincible will, fire and fury.

To sum up. Quite apart from the minor contradictions and inconsistencies which are perhaps incidental to a religious epic, the main design of *Paradise Lost* is open to serious objections. The poem as a whole, therefore, so far as its theme is concerned, is a flop. It lives by virtue of the first two books (dominated by Satan) and a few episodes and personal digressions scattered in the remaining books.

Its execution, however, is grand—so grand that there is no other poem in the English language that can even remotely be compared with it. It is in fact this grandeur of style that is a stumbling block to the majority of readers. Milton's very virtues become his defects. His thought is not only lofty, but too lofty. He has only one style for all purposes and this is too grand. He has embellished his poem with such wealth of learning as would tire out the most learned of his readers. If Milton had been gifted with a sense of humour, it would have saved him from pomposity. Mark Pattison remarked that 'an appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummate scholarship'. It is unfortunate for Milton that the twentieth century does not abound in consummate scholars. Dr Johnson the greatest scholar-critic of his day thus summed up his impression of *Paradise Lost* :

"*Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. No one ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions."

Paradise Regained. This briefer epic is said to have been written as a sequel to *Paradise Lost*. Ellwood a Quaker friend when asked by Milton for his opinion on *Paradise Lost* said, "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?" *Paradise Regained* has been unduly depreciated, but is in no way inferior to *Paradise Lost*. It is pitched in a lower key, is simpler in style and is on that account more congenial to read. One is thankful that its style is not as grand as that of *Paradise Lost*. Though there is nothing here to equal the magnificence of the first two books of *Paradise Lost*, there are in it passages as powerful as any in the greater epic. The banquet scene, the storm, the survey of Rome and Greece are as picturesque and memorable as anything elsewhere in Milton.

Nominally a Christian poem, its moral has value for all mankind. Milton's treatment of Christ's temptation in the wilderness as given in the Gospel is far sounder than his treatment of the fall in *Paradise Lost*. Adam lost Paradise because he succumbed to temptation. Christ won it back because he successfully resisted temptation. And he won it back as 'a man, of female seed', not as God incarnate, for Milton as an Arian did not believe in the divinity of Christ. The Paradise that Christ won is within the soul of man, not without. It is far more secure than the external paradise of the Garden of Eden that had failed.

Christ though famished, thirsty, and cold refuses to use his miraculous powers for his personal benefit. He spurns the Devil's offer of regal power, riches, and glory, for he who reigns within himself, and rules Passions, Desires and Fears, is more a King. The greatest possession is self-possession. Even the philosophies of Greece don't tempt him—

Alas, what can they teach, and not mislead; Ignorant
of themselves, of God much more...
Who therefore seeks in these
True wisdom, finds her not, or by delusion
Far worse, her false resemblance only meets,
An empty Cloud.

Those who seek wisdom in books are equally deluded—

However many books
Wise men have said are wearisome; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
(And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek)
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep verst in books and shallow in himself
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge;
As children gathering pebbles on the shore.

The Devil is completely discomfited and Christ triumphant returns home to his mother's house. *Paradise Regained* is an eminently

readable poem which like *Comus* imparts a great spiritual lesson in a most artistic manner.

Samson Agonistes. This last work of Milton, appeared in the same volume with *Paradise Regained*. It is a tragedy on the Greek model of Sophocles and Aeschylus. It is written in blank verse of a looser type with occasional rhymes in the choruses. The unities are strictly observed. The action takes just one day and is confined to one place. It has, however, little movement or progress, for three-fourths of it is simply a string of dialogues interspersed with choruses. It is only towards the end that something like a plot is discernible. It should be remembered that the play was not meant for the stage. Milton had no dramatic gift and *Samson Agonistes* though cast in the dramatic form is only an extended lyrical poem. A striking instance of Milton's egoism and lack of objectivity is the chorus's denunciation of women. The chorus in Greek drama is a body of detached observers, but the chorus in *Samson* becomes the mouthpiece of Milton.

Samson Agonistes (Samson the Athlete or Wrestler) deals with the last part of the life of Samson the Israelite hero whose story is given in the Book of Judges in the Old Testament. The play opens with Samson blind and prisoner of the Philistines at Gaza. There he is visited by some friends of his own tribe who form the chorus and seek to comfort him. Then he is visited by a number of persons. The first visitor is his father Manoa who hopes to obtain his son's release through the intercession of Philistine lords. The second visitor is his wife Dalila who pleads for pardon and reconciliation, but when repudiated by Samson shows herself in true colours by glorying in the role she had played of betraying her husband—a role that will bring her fame and honour as the saviour of her people. The third visitor is Harapha, a Philistine braggart, who taunts Samson, but who runs away when Samson makes a movement to assault him. Finally a public officer calls to summon him to provide entertainment by his athletic feats to the Philistine lords and people who are celebrating a festival of their god Dagon as a thanks-giving for their deliverance from Samson. He refuses at first, but then realising that this was from God, he consents to go. Soon after a messenger, an Israelite, appears to report that Samson had killed the Philistine lords as well as himself by pulling down the pillars of the structure in which they were sitting.

Great as the poetic appeal of the tragedy is, it is considerably heightened by its autobiographical interest. The similarity of circumstances between Samson and Milton is indeed striking. Their blindness, their heroic public services, their failure and frustration, their susceptibility to female charms and their dread of them, their marriage in the enemy's camp, their undaunted spirit, their confident trust in God—all are fully exploited to intensify the pathos of the poem. The awe or terror of the catastrophe is equally unmistakable. The cathartic effect of the typical Greek

tragedy is well expressed first by Manoa and then by the Chorus.

Manoa—

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.

Chorus —

All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns
And to his faithful Champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns
And all that band to resist
His uncontrollable intent,
His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event
With peace and consolation hath dismiss,
And calm of mind all passion spent.

Characteristics of Milton's Poetry. The key to Milton's genius lies in the fact that he combined in himself two conflicting cultures—Humanism and Puritanism. As a humanist scholar he was a lover of Hellenic art and beauty; as a Puritan he was fired with the religious zeal of a Hebrew prophet. These two cultures are incompatible and hard to reconcile. That Milton should have succeeded in synthetising them to a degree never attained before or since—not even in Spenser—was a remarkable achievement. The subject matter of his poems is religious, but the art forms he employed to express his Puritan Philosophy are those of the Renaissance.

His earlier poems provide an interesting study of the growth of puritan element in him. *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso* are purely artistic creations without a trace of puritanism in them. *Comus*, his first didactic poem with a puritan philosophy, is cast in the form of a masque, a species of drama Italian in origin and very popular in Renaissance England. This itself shows that Milton was too much of a humanist to share the Puritan hostility to the drama. Then in *Lycidas* Milton's puritanism, latent or subdued in *Comus*, comes to the surface in a militant form. But the poem itself is in the conventional form of pastoral elegy on Greek model. The subjects of his later poems—*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*—are frankly Biblical, but their treatment is in the classical manner. Milton used his classical culture in the service of his religion.

Having defined his genius we can proceed to an examination of the special qualities of Milton's poetry. The most striking quality of his poetry, the quality which has come to be called

'Miltonic' is sublimity. Milton is sublime both in thought and in style. He is always exalted; never descends to the commonplace, the mean or trivial. He is the acknowledged master of what Matthew Arnold called 'the grand style'. Another quality of his poetry is its learning. Milton was the greatest scholar of his day and his poems are loaded with learning. This learning appears most in his allusiveness. The allusions in Milton are of all kinds, but the most abundant are classical. Milton's vast learning thus displayed is the greatest stumbling block to his readers. Finally, Milton is the most egoistic of poets and without a trace of humour. It is Milton himself who is reflected in all his poems. But though egoistic and humourless he had a strong individuality that is indelibly stamped on all his work. He was indeed one 'whose soul' in the words of Wordsworth's sonnet 'was like a star, and dwelt apart'.

CHAPTER 18

THE PURITAN AGE : PROSE

Prose of this period superior to its poetry—Its great prose classics : *The Authorised version of the Bible*, *Religio Medici*, the *Anatomy of Melancholy* and the *Compleat Angler*—Writers of Ornate prose: Burton, Browne, Taylor and Milton—Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, its matter and style—Browne: the greatest prose writer of the century—His works—*Religio Medici*—Browne's style—Taylor—Milton's prose—*Aeropagitica*—Writers of plain prose: Hobbes, Clarendon, Walton—Hobbes's *Leviathan* Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*. Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*—Minors : Fuller, Urquhart, Harrington, Selous—The Character writers.

While the poetry of this period shows a falling off (except in the case of Milton) from the Elizabethan, this is not the case with its prose. The prose of the reign of the first two Stuarts and of the Commonwealth is not only superior to its poetry, it marks a distinct advance on the prose of the Elizabethan period. Generally speaking it continued to be quaint and highly poetic in manner, but it became more ornate with the wealth of learning and grave melancholy musing that were so characteristic of this age. In the hands of such writers as Browne, Taylor, and Milton English prose touched heights which have not been approached since. But this is not the whole account of the matter. Side by side there arose a new prose of the plainer kind approaching that of the Restoration and therefore modern in the writings of Hobbes, Clarendon and Izaak Walton. While religion was the dominant interest of the time and is widely reflected in its writings, prose extended its sphere by embracing a greater variety of subjects—history, biography, philosophy, antiquities, sports, and 'character'. The great prose classics of this period are *The Authorised version of the Bible*, Browne's *Religio Medici*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Walton's *Compleat Angler*.

For a more detailed consideration of the great prose-writers of this period a convenient division would be to classify them as Ornate and Plain. The minors and unclassed will be noticed at the end. *The Authorised version of the Bible* stands quite apart, being the work not of one but of about fifty writers. As it is the

earliest as well as the most important book of this age, it should be taken up first.

The Authorised Version of the Bible

In considering this, the greatest monument of religious prose in the English language, it would be helpful to give a brief resume of all the previous translations which were used in preparing it. The scriptures had been translated in England from the earliest Anglo-Saxon times, but the first regular translation was that made by Wycliff in the 14th century. His translation was from St. Jerome's¹ Latin version of the Bible known as the Vulgate. The Tudor humanists' ambition was to translate the scripture direct from the original Hebrew and Greek. Tyndale who was first in the field translated the New Testament and part of the Old in a popular style which fixed the standard for all subsequent translations of the Bible. He was followed by Coverdale whose complete translation known as the Great Bible was issued in 1540. It is also known as Cranmer's Bible because it contained a preface by the Archbishop. Some Protestant divines who had fled from Mary's persecution and settled in Geneva issued their own translation which came to be known as the Geneva Bible (1560). It was based on Tyndale and Coverdale and although it was scholarly and became very popular, it was never adopted to be read in churches, because of its Calvinistic origin. In 1568 appeared a new translation generally known as the Bishop's Bible from the fact that the majority of its thirteen translators were Bishops. It was this Bible which was used in churches when King James ascended the throne.

In 1604 the king called a conference at Hampton court to consider the demands of the Puritan party. One of the Puritan objections was that the renderings of the Bible read in English churches were faulty. So by the King's command a band of 47 eminent scholars was appointed to undertake a new and revised translation. This known as the *Authorised version* appeared in 1611. It is so called not because it was authorised by an Act of Parliament, but because it captured the imagination and affection of the people. Of course the 'authority' of the King who commanded its preparation may also have something to do with the title.

In preparing it the Bishop's Bible was taken as the base, while all the other previous translations including the Geneva version were consulted. The result was a most felicitous blend of the old and the new in diction, and a prose-rhythm which specially in lyrical parts, such as the Psalms and the Prophets, reflects the imaginative and emotional intensity of oriental poetry. The style is popular, yet dignified, and its slightly archaic vocabulary and phrasing gives it a touch of quaintness that is so appropriate and charming.

¹St Jerome (340-420), a Latin Father of the Church who translated the Hebrew Bible into Latin.

The influence of the *authorised version* on English thought and speech cannot be over-estimated. It would be no exaggeration to say that it is the warp and woof of English literature. It has fashioned the thought and moulded the style of all great English writers. To name only a few at random, who could think of Browne, Bunyan, or Ruskin without their Bible? Its words and phrases have passed into current speech, so much so that it is impossible to write good English without consciously or unconsciously using them. The Old and New Testaments are full of proverbial wisdom whose appeal is not confined to Christians. The teachings of Christ—specially his Sermon on the Mount—have had profound influence on non-Christian thought. It's a pity that students in India are apt to think of the Bible as merely the scripture of Christians. It is something more. It is a great book of literature and the greatest classic of English prose. A few of the more common Biblical expressions used in daily speech and writing are given below, some with slight popular adaptations : The apple of (one's) eye—at the eleventh hour—the powers that be—serve in the spirit, not in the letter—a law unto themselves—cover with confusion—heap coals of fire on (one's) head—be not wise in your own conceit—stay (one's) hand—a man after mine own heart—whose shoes I am not worthy to loose—God is no respecter of persons—to kick against the pricks—scales fell from his eyes—their name (number) is Legion—let the dead bury their dead (let the past bury its dead)—put new wine into old bottles—in sackcloth and ashes—clear as crystal—a house divided against itself—he that is not with me is against me—the tree is known by its fruit—the blind leading the blind—the signs of the times—weighed in the balance and found wanting—physician, heal thyself—the root of all evil—scribes and pharisees—they that take the sword shall perish with (by) the sword—It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God—Yield up (give up) the ghost—still small voice—shake off the dust from (one's) feet—wash (one's) hands of—the mote in others' eye, the beam in our own—a thorn in the flesh—no prophet is accepted (honoured) in his own country—the labourer is worthy of his hire—the truth shall make you free—the good Samaritan—to turn the other cheek—spare the rod and spoil the child—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh—vanity of vanities, all is vanity, all is vanity and vexation of spirit—let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth—the whole duty of man—there is no new thing under the sun—the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom—stolen waters (fruits) are sweet—Go to the ant, thou sluggard; Consider her ways and be wise—let not the sun go down upon your wrath—a soft answer turneth away wrath—they have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind—the wages of sin is death.

Writers of Ornate Prose: Burton, Browne, Taylor and Milton.

Robert Burton (1577-1640) was a clergyman who resided permanently at Oxford. Of a brooding and melancholic temper he was a bookworm who devoured the libraries of Oxford and wrote the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, to relieve his depression. The book was published in 1621 and went through several editions with additions and alterations in his own life time. It is one of the most curious and entertaining of books and has established itself as a classic of English literature. Dr Johnson kept it as a bedside book; it influenced, among others, Sterne and Lamb. The book treats of the causes, symptoms and cure of melancholy or rather the disease called melancholia, which is now attributed to a bad liver. The two chief types of melancholy dealt with are Love Melancholy and Religious Melancholy.

Ostensibly a medical work, the book is really an anatomy of human folly enlivened with the author's grave humour. It is full of Latin quotations, sometimes with their translations, from authors both ancient and modern, known and unknown. The author is so fond of words that he goes on piling breathlessly names and epithets pell-mell until the sentence becomes monstrous in size. The book is really an encyclopaedia of its professed subject as well as of curious learning and offers abundant material for learned conversation. Apart from its quaintness and enormous learning, the book may be said to have no style or many styles. He describes his style thus: 'I neglect phrases, and labour wholly to inform my reader's understanding, and not to please his ear; 'tis not my study or intent to compose neatly, which an orator requires, but to express myself readily and plainly as it happens. So that as a river runs sometimes precipitate and swift, then dull and slow; now direct, then *per ambages*; now deep, then shallow; now muddy, then clear; now broad, then narrow; doth my style flow; now serious, then light; now comical, then satirical; now more elaborate, then remiss, as the present subject required or as at that time I was affected.' Verbose as this is, Burton can express himself simply and tersely in shorter sentences whenever he chooses to do so. The following extracts will serve to illustrate Burton's matter as well as manner.

If any man except against the matter or manner of treating of this my subject, and will demand a reason of it, I can allege more than one. I write of melancholy, by being busie to avoid melancholy. There is no greater cause of melancholy than idlenesse, *no better cure than businesse*, as Rhasis holds: and howbeit *stultus labor est ineptiarum*, to be busied in toyes is to small purpose, yet hear that divine Seneca, better *aliud agere quam nihil*, better doe to no end than nothing. I writ therefore and busied myself in this playing labour, *otiosaue diligentia, ut vitarem torporem feriandi*, with Vectius in Macrobius, *atque otium in utiie verterem negotium*;

—Simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitae,
Lectorem delectando simul atque monendo.

To this end I write, like them, saith Lucian, that *recite to trees and declaime to pillers, for want of auditors* ; as Paulus Aegineta ingenuously confesseth *not that any thing was unknown or omitted, but to exercise myself* (which course if some took, I think it would be good for their bodies, and much better for their souls) ; or peradventure as others do, for fame to shew myself (*Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter*) I might be of Thucydides opinion, *to know a thing and not to expresse it, is all one as if he knew it not.*

When Achilles was tormented and sad for the losse of his dear friend Patroclus, his mother Thetis brought him a most elaborate and curious buckler made by Vulcan, in which were engraven sunne, moone, starres, planets, sea, land, men fighting, running, riding, women scolding, hills, dales, towns, castles, brooks, rivers, trees, &c ; with many pretty landskips and perspective peeces : with sight of which he was infinitely delighted...

Only take this for a corollary and conclusion, as thou tenderest thine owne welfare in this, and all other melancholy, thy good health of body and minde, observe this short precept, give not way to solitariness and idleness, *Be not solitary, be not idle.*

Browne. Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), the greatest prose writer of the century, exhibits the same qualities of quaintness, profound learning, grave meditation and quiet humour, but has the added charm of a style which for its dreamy cadence has no parallel in English. By profession a doctor, he was a strange amalgam of scientist, scholar, antiquary, and mystic. After taking his M.A. at Oxford he studied medicine in France, Italy and finally in Holland where he took his M.D. at Leyden. He settled at Norwich where he practised medicine for the rest of his life. Besides a large practice, Browne had many scientific and antiquarian interests and carried on correspondence with learned antiquaries of England and the Continent. Though a scientist, he was not free from the general credulity of the age. When invited to give his expert opinion in a trial in which two unfortunate women stood charged with the capital offence of practising witchcraft, he solemnly testified against them. His declaration of belief in witches and witchcraft influenced the jury and the poor women were condemned to death. This is shocking to the moderns, but it must be remembered that belief in witches was almost universal in Browne's day. The science of the seventeenth century was a primitive affair and Browne believed not only in witches and devils but in astrology, magic, alchemy and other superstitions. He was knighted in 1671 and died on his 77th birthday, October 19, 1682.

Browne was one of the most learned men of his age. In addition to letters and pamphlets he produced six works of pretty uniform excellence as literature. These are : *Religio Medici*, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica or Vulgar Errors*, *Hydriotaphia or Urn Burial*, *The Garden of Cyrus*, *A Letter to a Friend*, and *Christian Morals Vulgar Errors*.

Vulgar Errors. This, the bulkiest of Browne's works, is a discursive account of the errors and superstitions not only of the vulgar, as its title might suggest, but also of the learned. It seeks to expose such popular errors, as for example : that a swan sings before it became that a salamander lives on fire ; that a drowned man's body

rises on the ninth day ; that a pelican opens her breast to feed her young ones with her blood ; that an elephant has no joints ; that a wolf at first sight strikes a man dumb.

Hydriotaphia. Inspired by the discovery of some sepulchral urns in the neighbourhood, *Hydriotaphia* starts with a discussion of the various ancient modes of burial leading to a lofty meditation on Browne's favourite subject: death and oblivion. This little treatise of about fifty pages affords the best example of Browne's melancholy mysticism couched in a style that remains unsurpassed for its verbal music in the whole range of English prose literature. Though less popular than *Religio Medici* it is his masterpiece and is the quintessence of his thought and style.

The Garden of Cyrus. This printed along with *Hydriotaphia* is the best example, in Saintsbury's phrase, of Browne's 'mysticism fantastic'. It deals with quincunx or arrangement in fives like the five of playing cards. Starting with the story put out by Xenophon that the garden of the Persian emperor Cyrus was planted in quincunxes, Browne proceeds to hunt out quincunxes everywhere on earth and in heaven. He becomes fascinated with the number five which acquires a mystic significance. The reader is bewildered in the maze of quincunxes which threw poor Coleridge almost into a fit of hysterics so that he saw "quincunxes in heaven above, quincunxes in earth below, quincunxes in the mind of men, quincunxes in tones, in optic nerves, in roots of trees, in leaves, in everything." The book, like its companion *Hydriotaphia*, was simply an occasion for displaying the author's vast learning and provides a good illustration of the humorous quaintness of the seventeenth century.

A Letter to a Friend and *Christian Morals*. These are interconnected, as some of the passages are common to both, and it is possible that, if published in Browne's life time, they would have appeared as one. In any critical consideration of them it must be remembered that they were not corrected by Browne. The letter starts with a description of a T.B. patient with details of the changes wrought by approaching death, passes to thoughts and feelings of the dying man, and ends with moral reflections and precepts. These reflections and precepts in an expanded form make up the subject matter of *Christian Morals*. Though less distinguished than the others in point of style, these pieces are never the less of the same order and are specially characteristic of Browne's role as a preacher. Because of this they have close affinities with *Religio Medici* and the student would do well to read them along with it. *Christian Morals* has been unduly depreciated by some modern critics who think they are above Christian or other morals. It is significant that the treatise was edited by the great eighteenth century moralist, Dr Johnson.

Religio Medici (the religion of a doctor) appeared in 1642 and became immediately popular. It was translated into Latin, French, German, Dutch, and Italian. It was reprinted about eight times

during the author's life-time. Since then it has gone through many editions and become an established classic.

Browne wrote the book with the aim of defending himself from the traditional charge that doctors were atheists. Browne's confession of faith reveals him as a scientist who is also a devout Christian. Religion is not incompatible with science. Browne was very conscious of the limits of Reason. Spiritual truths, he says, are above Reason. Faith consists in believing "a thing not only above but contrary to Reason, and against the arguments of our proper senses." The use of Reason he restricts to the non-essentials of religion. In unimportant matters, the superficialities and accretions which frequently pass for religion, he is free to be sceptical. In regard to these, he declares, "every man's own reason is his best Oedipus."

It is this enlightened orthodoxy that appealed to his age. In the midst of furious religious controversies of the time and among thousands of religious books, treatises, and pamphlets, it was the one book that treated of religion in a gentle, tolerant, and human way without partisan bias. And it is because of this that the book is still popular, for Browne's intelligent orthodoxy reflects the mind of the enlightened in all ages.

While the revelation of Browne's quaint and kindly personality constitutes the chief fascination of *Religio Medici*, it is considerably enhanced by the beauty of his style. Style indeed is the principal attraction in his other works. Browne was a conscious and deliberate stylist. The balance and rhythm of his sentences gives to his prose a poetic quality hardly surpassed in any other writer. Add to this the quaintness of his melancholy mysticism, archaic diction, and far-fetched learning and you have a blend of dreamy harmonies which have no parallel in English prose. His highly latinised and idiosyncratic diction, and his learned allusions, do make him a rather difficult writer, but those who want to enjoy an intellectual and emotional feast would not grudge the little effort involved in overcoming these obstacles. The following extracts are from *Religio Medici*, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*.

'.....there hath been many Diogenes, and as many Timons, though few of that name; men are liv'd over again, the world is now as it was in Ages past; there was none then, but hath been some one since that parallels him, and as it were his revived self.' (From *Religio Medici*)

'There is therefore but one comfort left; though it be in the power of the weakest arm to take away life, it is not in the strongest to deprive us of death: God would not exempt himself from that; the misery of immortality in the flesh, he undertook not that was immortal.' (From *Religio Medici*)

'But the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit or perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the Pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana, he is almost lost that built it. Time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse, confounded that of himself. In vain we compute our felicities by the advantage of our good names, since bad have equal durations; and Thersites is like to live as long as Agamemnon. Who knows

whether the best of men be known, or whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot, than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Without the favour of the everlasting register, the first man had been as unknown as the last, and Methuselah's long life had been his only chronicle.' (From *Hydriotaphia*)

'But the Quincunx of Heaven runs low and it is time to close the five ports of knowledge.....To keep our eyes open longer were but to act our Antipodes. The huntsmen are up in America and they are already past their first sleep in Persia'. (From *The Garden of Cyrus*)

Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), the most eloquent of Anglican divines, was the son of a barber, was favoured by Laud and became chaplain to the King. His *Liberty of Prophesying* (i.e. preaching) is a plea for toleration in matters of faith. He is famous for his sermons and his *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (1650-51). His style is highly rhetorical and rhythmical, rich in fancy and classical learning. Gentle and urbane, it is enlivened with picturesque descriptions of Nature. The musical and pictorial beauties of his prose are, however, offset to some extent by the enormous length of his sentences, their involved syntax and Latinisms—faults which he shares with Milton. He has the habit of beginning many of his similes with the stock formula 'so have I seen' which becomes irritating after a time. The following extracts are from *Holy Dying* and sermons.

The Pomp of Death

Take away but the pomps of death, the disguises, and solemn bugbears, and the actings by candlelight, and proper and fantastic ceremonies, the minstrels and the noise-makers, the women and the weepers, the swoonings and the shriekings, the nurses and the physicians, the dark room and the ministers, the kindred and the watches, and then to die is easy, ready, and quitted from its troublesome circumstances. It is the same harmless thing that a poor shepherd suffered yesterday, or a maid-servant today; and at the same time in which you die, in that very night a thousand creatures die with you, some wise men and many fools; and the wisdom of the first will not quit him, and the folly of the latter does not make him unable to die.

(From *Of Holy Dying*)

The Skylark

For so I have seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministries here below: so is the prayer of a good man.

(From Sermon on *The Return of Players*)

Milton. The writer of *Paradise Lost* was not only a great poet, he was also a great prose writer. A great deal of the matter of his numerous political and ecclesiastical pamphlets is merely journalistic

and being controversial in character is marred by peevishness, violence, and partisan bias. The only interest of these controversial writings is the element of self-revelation and magnificent bursts of eloquence scattered through them. The greatness of Milton's prose, therefore, belongs to his style. In any consideration of this style, it must be remembered that Milton was not in his element in prose. His native element was poetry. He regarded prose as an inferior instrument of expression and his prose work as that 'of his left hand'. It was imposed on him as a duty. Moreover, as Latin Secretary to the Government, it was his business habitually to write in Latin. Internal controversies alone forced him to write in English. After his Episcopal and Divorce pamphlets he published in 1644 his tract on *Education* and the most eloquent of all his prose pieces, *Aeropagitica*. It is a noble and impassioned plea for liberty of the press which continues even today to be a living topic throughout the world.

Milton's style is, as might be expected, highly poetical. In its basic character it is the style of an orator—lofty, impassioned, and rhythmical. Its faults are as obvious as its beauties and they are common more or less to all the ornate writers of the age. Milton cannot organise his sentences which, apart from their Latin syntax, are monstrously long, some of them filling well over a page. The extracts that follow are from the tract on *Education* and *Aeropagitica*.

I call therefore a complete and generous education, that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war. And how all this may be done between twelve and one-and-twenty, less time than is now bestowed in pure trifling at grammar and sophistry, is to be thus ordered. (From the tract *of Education*).

It was from out the rind of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear, without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice, with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian. I can not praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat.

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about amazed at what she means, and in their envious gabble would prognosticate a year of sects and schisms. (From *Aeropagitica*).

Truth

Truth, indeed, came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape, most glorious to look on; but when he ascended and his apostles after him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the god Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever

since the sad friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons! nor ever shall do till her Master's second coming; he shall bring together every joint and member, and mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection.

Writers of Plain Prose :

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the great political theorist of the seventeenth century, was a nobleman's tutor and later of the Prince of Wales who became Charles II. His small *Treatise of Human Nature* appeared in 1650 and was followed in 1651 by his most famous philosophical work *Leviathan*. *Leviathan*, a huge sea monster is the name Hobbes gives to the State. His conception of the State is absolute monarchy. His thesis is that man is a selfish being and in the state of nature is hardly better than a savage beast. In order to satisfy his appetites he has to wage constant war with others. The life of man in this state is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. In order to escape the perils of such insecurity men agree to surrender their individual rights to a leader with absolute powers to keep them in check. Right and Wrong, Good and Bad, according to Hobbes, are concepts which are determined by self-interest. Hobbes also denied freedom of will in his *Letter upon Liberty and Necessity* (1654). Hobbes was a profound and original thinker and his political and ethical theses provoked a storm of protest. Almost all philosophical writers for the next hundred years devoted themselves to the task of refuting his doctrines.

Hobbes was a master of English prose in the plain style. His stern logic supported by interesting illustrations, his precise diction, and brevity give to his prose a force which others attained by rhetoric and profusion. The following extracts are from *Leviathan* and *Letter upon Liberty and Necessity*.

Lastly, though I reverence those men of ancient time that either have written truth perspicuously, or set us in a better way to find it out ourselves: yet to the antiquity itself I think nothing due. For if we will reverence the age, the present is the oldest. If the antiquity of the writer, I am not sure that generally they to whom such honour is given were more ancient when they wrote than I am that am writing. But if it be well considered, the praise of ancient authors proceeds not from the reverence of the dead, but from the competition and mutual envy of the living. (From *Leviathan*)

The Necessity of the Will

The question is not, whether a man be a free agent, that is to say whether he can write or forbear, speak or be silent, according to this will; but whether the will to write, and the will to forbear, come upon him according to his will, or according to anything else in his own power. I acknowledge this liberty, that I can *do* if I *will*; but to say, I can *will* if I *will*, I take to be an absurd speech.

A wooden top that is lashed by the boys, and runs about sometimes to one wall, sometimes to another, sometimes spinning, sometimes hitting men on the shins, if it were sensible of its own motion, would think it proceeded from its own will, unless it felt what lashed it. And is a man any wiser when he runs

to one place for a benefice, to another for a bargain, and troubles the world with writing errors and requiring answers, because he thinks he does it without other cause than his own will, and seeth not what are the lashings that cause that will.

Clarendon. Edward Hyde, Lord Clarendon (1609-74) was a lawyer who rose to be chief minister of Charles II. Being a thorough-going Conservative and bigoted Anglican, he opposed Charles's toleration of the Catholics and Puritans and became unpopular. The secret marriage of his daughter to the King's Catholic brother incensed his own party who suspected him of connivance. The Plague, the Great Fire of London, and the Dutch war completed his ruin. Let down by the King, he was impeached for high treason and fled to France where after living in exile for seven years he died in 1674.

His *History of the Rebellion*, begun in 1646, was published posthumously (1704-7). It is a defence of Charles I and the Royalist cause and is not impartial. But whatever its defects as history, its merits as literature are undeniable. What Hobbes did for philosophy Clarendon did for history. The stateliness of his prose, his narrative skill, his vivid descriptions and above all his penetrating portrayals of character have made his *History* a classic of literature. The faults of his style are obvious. They are prolixity and awkward syntax, but neither is as tiring as in Taylor or Milton. In fact Clarendon's style is midway between the Ornate of the Elizabethan and the plain of the next age. The following extract is from the character of Lord Falkland, the best of his portraits.

Character of Lord Falkland

In this unhappy battle (the first of Newbury) was slain the Lord Viscount Falkland : a person of such prodigious parts of learning and knowledge, of that inimitable sweetness and delight in conversation, of so flowing and obliging a humanity and goodness to mankind, and of that primitive simplicity and integrity of life, that if there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed civil war than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to all posterity.

In the morning before the battle, as always upon action, he was very cheerful, and put himself into the first rank of the Lord Byron's regiment, who was then advancing upon the enemy, who had lined the hedges on both sides with musketeers; from whence he was shot with a musket on the lower part of the belly, and in the instant falling from his horse, his body was not found till the next morning, till when there was some hope he might have been a prisoner; though his nearest friends, who knew his temper, received small comfort from that imagination. Thus fell that incomparable young man, in the four-and-thirtieth year of his age, having so much despatched the business of life, that the oldest rarely attain to that immense knowledge, and the youngest enter not into the world with more innocence : and whosoever leads such a life need not care upon how short warning it is taken from him.

Izaak Walton (1593-1683) was a small tradesman in London who had a passion for fishing. He was acquainted with the clergymen of his day and was fond of literature and literary men. His intimate biographies of Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Hooker, and

Bishop Sanderson show his simplicity and hero-worship. But his fame rests on his *Compleat Angler* (1653). Ostensibly a fishing manual, it is a book of general recreation that appeals to all, anglers and non-anglers alike. It is in the form of a dialogue between the author Piscator (fisherman) and his disciple Venator (Hunter) who has been persuaded to give up his cruel sport in favour of the gentle art of angling. (Incidentally, Walton's use of live bait, particularly his torture of frogs belies the gentle nature of his craft). Besides instructing Venator in the art of catching various kinds of fish, Piscator gives him a good deal of religious and moral instruction.

The charm of the book consists in its delightful pictures of the English countryside and in its revelation of the author's personality—his sweet simplicity, his quaint and humorous fancies, his old world wisdom, his unaffected piety and above all his transparent purity of heart. The old man was an epicurean in his own way. He loved not only the beauties of Nature—gliding streams, fresh fields, meadows and summer showers under a shade, but also milkmaids' songs, the warm hospitality of his favourite inn with its good cheer, its comfortable bed with sheets perfumed with lavender.

The entire discourse is delivered in a homely, garrulous, yet dignified style that matches well with its matter. Like Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, the *Compleat Angler* is an 'antique' in English literature, and a more rarefied one. Walton himself described it as 'a recreation of recreation'. To read it is to enjoy an arm-chair picnic. It is the most popular book of the seventeenth century. One is tempted to quote at length, but we must be content with two short extracts.

Let me tell you, scholar, I have a rich neighbour that is always so busie that he has no leasure to laugh; the whole business of his life is to get money, and more money, that he may still get more and more money; he is still drudging on, and says that Solomon says, 'The diligent hand maketh rich;' and 'tis true indeed; but he considers not that 'tis not in the power of riches to make a man happy: for it was wisely said by a man of great observation, 'that there be as many miseries beyond riches as on this side them.' And yet God deliver us from pinching poverty, and grant that, having a competency, we may be content and thankful. Let us not repine, or so much as think the gifts of God unequally dealt, if we see another abound with riches, when, as God knows, the cares that are the keys that keep those riches hang often so heavily at the rich man's girdle, that they clog him with weary days and restless nights, even when others sleep quietly. We see but the outside of the rich man's happiness; few consider him to be like the silkworm, that, when she seems to play, is at the very same time spinning her own bowels, and consuming herself; and this many rich men do, loading themselves with corroding cares, to keep what they have (probably) unconscionably got. Let us therefore be thankful for health and competence, and, above all, for a quiet conscience.

Venator. On my word, Master, this is a gallant *Trout*, what shall we do with him?

Piscator. Marry e'en eat him to supper; We'll go to my hostess, from whence we came; she told me, as I was going out of door, that my brother *Peter*, a good angler and a cheerful companion, had sent word he would lodge there to-night, and bring a friend with him. My hostess has two beds, and, I know, you and I may have the best; we'll rejoice with my brother *Peter* and his friend,

tell tales, or sing Ballads, or make a catch, or find some harmless sport to content us, and pass away a little time without offence to God or man.

Venator. A match, good master, let's go to that house, for the linen looks white, and smells of Lavender, and I long to lie in a pair of sheets that smells so; let's be going, good Master, for I am hungry again with fishing;

Piscator. Nay, stay a little, good Scholar. I caught my last *Trout* with a worm, now I will put on a minnow and try a quarter of an hour about yonder trees for another, and so walk towards our lodging. Look you Scholar, thereabout we shall have a bite presently, or not at all: Have with you (Sir!) O' my word I have hold of him. Oh, it is a great logger-headed *Chub*; come, hang him upon that willow twig, and let's be going. But turn out of the way a little, good Scholar, towards yonder high *honeysuckle* hedge; there we'll sit and sing whilst this shower falls so gently upon the teeming earth, and gives yet a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorn these verdant meadows.

Look, under that broad Beech-tree, I sat down, when I was last this way at fishing, and the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an Echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow cave, near to the brow of that Primrose-hill; there I sat viewing the silver streams glide silently towards their centre, the tempestuous sea; yet, sometimes opposed by rugged roots, and pebble stones, which broke their waves, and turned them into foam; and sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless Lambs, some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported themselves in the cheerful sun; and saw others were craving comfort from the swollen udders of their bleating Dams. As I thus sat, these and other sights had so fully possessed my soul with content, that I thought as the Poet has happily expressed it:

I was for that time lifted above earth;
And possessed joys not promised in my birth.

As I left this place, and entered into the next field, a second pleasure entertained me, 'twas a handsome Milkmaid that had not yet attained so much age and wisdom as to load her mind with any fears of many things that will never be (as too many men too often do), but she cast away all care, and sung like a Nightingale: her voice was good, and the Ditty fitted for it; 'twas that smooth song which was made by *Kumarlow*, now at least fifty years ago; and the Milkmaid's Mother sung an answer to it, which was made by Sir *Walter Rawleigh* in his younger days.

They were old-fashioned poetry, but choicely good, I think much better than the strong lines that are now in fashion in this critical age. Look yonder on my word, yonder they both be a-milking again, I will give her the *Chub*, and persuade them to sing those two songs to us.

God speed you good women, I have been a-fishing, and am going to *Bleak-Hall* to my bed, and having caught more fish than will sup myself and my friend, I will bestow this upon you and your daughter, for I use to sell none.

Milkwoman. Marry God requite you Sir, and we'll eat it cheerfully, and if you come this way a-fishing two months hence, a grace of God I'll give you a sillybub of new verjuice, in a new made haycock, for it, and my *Maudlin* shall sing you one of her best *Ballads*; for she and I both love all *Anglers*, they be such honest, civil, quiet men.

Minor Writers

Among the minor prose writers of the period may be mentioned: Fuller, Urquhart, Harrington, Selden, and the Character writers. Thomas Fuller (1608-61) is the most noteworthy of these. A clergyman, noted for his sermons, he rose to be chaplain to Charles II, but died before he could be rewarded with a Bishopric. His two well-known works are the *Holy and Profane State* and the *Worthies of England*, the latter being the most characteristic. The *Worthies* is a collection of biographies of the illustrious sons of

which afforded ample scope for their wit. The 'Characters' like the 'humours' of Ben Jonsonian comedy were types, not individuals, and led ultimately to the development of the Essay.

Bishop Hall, the satirist, was the first in this field with his *Characters of Virtues and Vices* (1608). He was followed by Sir Thomas Overbury whose *Characters* appeared in 1614, a year after his foul murder in the Tower. But the most famous collection of characters was written by John Earle who later became a Bishop. His *Microcosmographie* or *A Piece of the World Discovered in Essays and Characters* appeared in 1628. Earle who was chaplain to Charles II in exile was noted for his piety, learning, and wisdom. His *Microcosmographie*, is a store-house of wisdom enlivened by touches of poetry and sentiment, epigrammatic wit and a refreshing sense of fun. A critic, he says, 'is one that makes all books sell dearer, whilst he swells them out into folios with his comments'. The following extract from 'The Child' shows his fine handling of sentiment.

A Child

Is a Man in a small Letter, yet the best copy of *Adam* before he tasted of *Eve* or the apple; and he is happy whose small practice in the world can only write this Character. He is nature's fresh picture newly drawn in oil, which time, and much handling dims and defaces. His Soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world, wherewith, at length, it becomes a blurred notebook. He is purely happy, because he knows no evil, nor hath made means by sin to be acquainted with misery. He arrives not at the mischief of being wise, nor endures evils to come, by foreseeing them. He kisses and loves all, and, when the smart of the rod is past, smiles on his beater. Nature and his Parents alike dandle him, and 'tice him on with a bait of sugar to a draught of wormwood. He plays yet, like a young Prentice the first day, and is not come to his task of melancholy. All the language he speaks yet is tears, and they serve him well enough to express his necessity. His hardest labour is his tongue, as if he were loath to use so deceitful an Organ; and he is best company with it when he can but prattle. We laugh at his foolish sports, but his game is our carnes; and his drums, rattles, and hobby-horses, but the Emblems and mocking of man's business. His father hath writ him as his own little story, wherein he reads those days of his life that he cannot remember, and sighs to see what innocence he has out-lived.

BOOK SIX

THE AUGUSTAN AGE—1660-1800

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

The reign of Charles II (1660-85)—The reign of James II (1685-88)—The Glorious Revolution (1688)—William III (1689-1702)—The Revolution settlement—The Restoration Society.

The Restoration Period (1660-1700)

In order to follow the political events of the Restoration period it is important to grasp a few broad facts. Both Charles II and James II wanted to rule as absolute monarchs. Both were Roman Catholics, Charles a secret Catholic and James an open and avowed one. Both aimed at restoring Catholicism in England. Both were the nephews (sister's sons) of Louis XIV of France, the 'Grand Monarch', from whom they received secret help in carrying out their designs. While both failed, James's folly in openly attempting to impose Catholicism on England caused a revolution which brought about his downfall. The two parties of the Civil War, Cavaliers and Roundheads survived into the Restoration Period but under different names. The Cavaliers became Tories and those Roundheads who joined the Anglican church became Whigs. The Puritans came to be called Dissenters.

The Parliament which was called after the restoration of monarchy was so warmly royalist and so friendly to the King that Charles kept it sitting for as long as 18 years. His Chief Minister Clarendon made harsh laws against the Dissenters: forbade them public worship, excluded them from government offices and subjected them to various other harassments. He was a very loyal friend to the King, but a series of disasters brought about his downfall. First, the Great Plague in London (1665), then, the Great Fire of London (1666) and finally, the defeat of the English fleet by the Dutch in 1667—for all these Clarendon was made the scapegoat. He was dismissed and to escape impeachment he fled to France where he died in exile.

The new Ministry that took over was called the Cabal, from the

initial letters of the names of its members. Two of these were Roman Catholics. This was the first step in the king's design to restore Catholicism in England. With such backing he issued a Declaration of Indulgence which abolished the penal laws of the Clarendon Code against Catholics and Dissenters. This was a clever move to free the Catholics, for Charles hoped that the Dissenters would be so pleased to get freedom of worship that they wouldn't object to the same concession being given to the Catholics. He was wrong in his calculations, for the effect of the Declaration was just the reverse of what he had expected. The people saw through the King's game and all Protestants—Anglicans as well as Dissenters—became united in their opposition to the King. The King sensing the danger withdrew the Declaration. But even this did not pacify the Parliament. They passed the Test Act which made it compulsory for every servant of the crown to take the sacrament according to the rites of the Anglican Church. So strong was the feeling against the Catholics that a fictitious plot was invented to implicate them.

It was given out by one Titus Oates that he had discovered a Catholic plot to overthrow the Government and the Church. This 'Popish Plot' was believed against all evidence and many innocent Catholics were put to death. The Whigs were thoroughly roused. As Charles had no legitimate child, the prospect of his brother James, an open Catholic, on the throne of England was so distasteful that they threatened to exclude him from succession by bringing in the Exclusion Bill. Charles, however, was too quick for them. He dissolved the Parliament (1679) to prevent the Bill from being passed, and ruled for the remaining years of his life without Parliament, getting such money as he needed from Louis XIV.

Charles died in 1685 and James succeeded him. Charles, though treacherous and intriguing, had been on the whole cautious and discreet, for he had no wish 'to go on his travels again'. He had not pushed things too far and had been able to do well for himself. But James had no such prudence. He was headstrong and reckless and attempted openly to restore national Catholicism. Within six months of his ascending the throne there was a Whig rebellion under the Duke of Monmouth, an illegitimate son of Charles II who wanted to seize his father's crown for himself. The rebellion failed and Monmouth was executed. This was followed by farcical trials and merciless executions of rebels under a circuit of judges which came to be called the 'Bloody Assize'. Encouraged by his success in crushing the rebellion, James became more reckless. He collected an army of Irish Catholics, appointed Catholic teachers at Oxford, and issued another Declaration of Indulgence, ordering it to be read in every church. When seven bishops objected to this, he ordered them to be tried. Though the judges were afraid, they acquitted the bishops. Just about this time when the feeling ran high against James a son was born to him. This alarmed the people, for they feared that the son would be brought up as a Catholic. They saw no other way but to get rid of James altogether.

James had two daughters, Mary and Anne, who had been brought up as Protestants. Mary was married, upon Whigs' insistence, to William of Orange, the Protestant leader of Holland, who was also James's nephew (sister's son) and stood next in succession to the English throne after Mary and Anne. On the unexpected birth of a son to James the English people invited William to take over the throne. William with an army landed in England in 1688. James, deserted by his followers, fled to France. William and Mary were declared King and Queen of England (1689). The Cavalier party in England did not strike a blow for James, but his supporters (Jacobites) in Scotland and Ireland did put up a fight to resist William. Their resistance was soon overcome and William became master of all James's dominions.

The downfall of James II settled the question of absolute monarchy for ever. In 1689 the supremacy of Parliament was established by passing into law the Bill of Rights. It clearly limited the king's powers and laid down that no Catholic could be king of England. It put an end to religious persecutions, granting everyone freedom of religious belief and worship. The censorship of the Press against which Milton had thundered in vain in his *Aeropagitica* expired in 1695 and was not renewed, thus, making it possible for anybody to criticise the government.

The Revolution settlement was a compromise between the Whigs and Tories. It was a conservative settlement in that it left the vested interests of the two parties intact. The chief vested interest was the control over 'rotten boroughs'. These were constituencies which had become unreal (rotten), but could yet send a fixed number of representatives to Parliament. They could be owned, bought and sold, and continued to be a prolific source of Parliamentary corruption until the era of the Reform Bill of 1832. The great virtue of Glorious Revolution, however, lay in the victory of law over arbitrary power. It laid the foundations of English liberties and started England on the road to modern democracy.

William III (1689-1702) was a wise and generous-minded king who would not persecute people for their opinions or punish those who had opposed him. The main event of his reign was his war with France. The power of Louis XIV was a menace not only to his country, Holland, but to the whole of Europe. William made himself the leader of the Grand Alliance of European powers against France. England supported William's war not only because the safety to Holland was necessary for the safety of England, but also because Louis XIV was a Jacobite and attempted to reimpose James II on England. William did not win any spectacular battles and the war ended after eight years with the indecisive Treaty of Ryswick (1697) by which Louis recognised William as king of England.

After uneasy peace of four years Louis again provoked England by declaring the dying James's son (the old Pretender) King of England as James III. He had already provoked the whole of

Europe by accepting, against all protests, the entire Spanish inheritance for his grandson Philip after the death of the sickly, idiotic, and childless king of Spain, Carlos II. As the acquisition by France of the vast Spanish dominions in Europe and the New World would have seriously disturbed the balance of power in Europe, the combined European powers challenged Louis in what is known as the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713). William was about to enter this war when he died (1702). Since Mary had already died (1694), Anne ascended the throne.

Politically England had won her freedom after a hard and prolonged struggle between king and Parliament. In the social sphere this period saw the impoverishment of the land-owning class and the rise of a rich middle class of squires and tradesmen. The Cavaliers had sold away much of their land in the Commonwealth period in order to pay the heavy fines imposed on them by Cromwell's Government. The lands thus sold remained with the buyers who were mostly Roundheads in the previous era but who after the restoration embraced Anglicanism to save their acquisitions and became Whig leaders. Morally there was a sad deterioration in society after the Restoration. Released suddenly from the restraints of Puritan rule, the people let themselves go and went to the other extreme of licentious indulgence.

They took their cue from the king and his court who had been frenchified and brought home French tastes and manners. Charles, amorous and pleasure-loving, had many concubines by whom he had numerous illegitimate children. The courtiers were equally gay and dissolute. The profligacy of the court and the smart and fashionable set surrounding him is reflected in the drama of the period, specially in its comedy, which is grossly immoral. The infection of the court, however, was restricted to the upper classes. The lower classes, the masses, remained, on the whole, sober and decorous.

Augustan Literature: An Introduction

With the Restoration we enter upon a literary period of roughly 150 years which is generally called the Augustan Age. It comprises the Restoration period proper or the Age of Dryden and almost the whole of the 18th century—the Age of Queen Anne, the Age of Pope, and the Age of Johnson. The term Augustan originated in Dr Johnson's use of it in his praise of Dryden's poetry: 'What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden. . . . he found it brick, and left it marble.' Though no one today thinks that Shakespeare and Milton are brick and Pope marble, the poets and critics of the 18th century really believed that as the Age of Emperor Augustus was made glorious by Virgil and Horace, so their own age was made glorious by Dryden and Pope.

Another name given to this age is Classic or Neo-classic Age. Men

of letters in this period believed that the best literary models were to be found among the writers of classical Greece and Rome, and that the best thing for them, therefore, was to obey the rules laid down by them. In actual practice, however, they followed the Latin and not the Greek masters. The authority of the rules prescribed by the ancients (i.e. the Latins) was sacred and must prevail over individual idiosyncrasy or originality. It is not surprising, therefore, that this Neo-classic literature should have the same qualities that distinguish the Latin literature of the days of Augustus. These qualities are simplicity, regularity, proportion and finish. It is a literature founded upon intellect, not upon feeling; upon reason, not upon imagination.

In other words, it is opposed to romanticism of the preceding age as well as that of the age that succeeded it. It does not soar into the skies or probe the mysteries of life and death, but keeps to the common highway of life. It is suspicious of enthusiasm and would not allow eccentricity, demanding as it did a dead level of uniformity. It is not spontaneous but the result of conscious, deliberate art. Its ideal was good sense and reasonableness. In poetry it favoured only one form of verse—the closed heroic couplet. Finally, it is essentially 'genteel' i.e., urbane or polished, reflecting the tastes and manners of the artificial 'town' society. It had no interest in the beauties of Nature or the countryside. This is the most puzzling feature of the Augustan age, for love of nature and the countryside is deeply rooted in the English people and is reflected in their literature of every other period. The explanation lies in the English Augustans' deliberate imitation of the Roman way of life. As Rome in the days of her glory was the centre of all civilised activity, the Romans, like the Greeks, believed that city living was the only mode of civilised existence. One of their first acts after they had conquered a territory was to build cities and towns.

It is because of these so-called classical qualities that the Age is often called the Age of Reason. The qualities dear to the classical school are admirable for prose and it is significant that its greatest achievements were in the realm of prose. It is the age of Bunyan and Dryden, of Addison and Swift, of Goldsmith and Johnson, of Richardson, Fielding, Smollet and Sterne. The most important contributions of the 18th century proper are the Essay and the Novel. Besides the Essay and the Novel the age saw the establishment of the modern newspaper and the magazine. There are other things still. We have the greatest biography in the English language—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, the famous *Diary* of Samuel Pepys and the Letters of Chesterfield, Lady Montagu, and Horace Walpole. Outside literature proper, there are works of outstanding merit in other fields. Such are the works of Locke, Hume, and Berkeley in Philosophy; of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon in history (Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is a classic of English literature) and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, a classic of Economics. This is a tremendous achievement and the age has rightly earned for itself another title—the Age of Prose.

The Age of Prose, however, has a depreciatory sense with reference to poetry, for the poetry of this age is prosaic. It is mostly argumentative, didactic or satiric. Its greatest poets, Dryden and Pope, are famous for their satires. In versification their triumph consisted in the perfection of the heroic couplet. Their poetry is clever, brilliant, polished; but it has no fire. It amuses and entertains, but does not inspire.

The drama of this age also reflects its intellectual qualities. The age being deficient in poetry, it did not produce great tragedy for which poetry is essential. Its score in this line amounts to just two plays—Dryden's *All for Love* and Otway's *Venice Preserved*, and even these are much below the Elizabethan level. In comedy the age has better showing. This consists in the brilliant but grossly indecent comedies of the Restoration and the rollicking, good humoured comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan in the seventies of the 18th century.

After this brief survey of the whole period we can now proceed to a detailed examination of its four stages in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 19

THE RESTORATION PERIOD OR THE AGE OF DRYDEN : POETRY

The Age of Dryden (1640-1702) covers the reigns of Charles II, James II and William III. With the restoration of Stuart monarchy a sweeping change came over English life and letters. The change was decisive, though not sudden. It had begun earlier, but after 1660 it becomes unmistakable and rapid. Almost every writer now shows a different way of thinking and writes in an entirely different style. To put it briefly, the new literature has become practical, utilitarian. It is concerned with the real and the actual rather than with the speculative or imaginative. The epithet used at the time to designate such literature was 'classic'; we in the 20th century would call it realistic.

The causes of this change have been much disputed. It was for a long time attributed entirely to French influence. The King and his court in their exile in France, it was said, had taken a fancy to French literature and on their return encouraged writers to adopt French models. Though this is an over-simplification, the view is not without foundation. French literature at this time was supreme in Europe as Italy's had been in the 16th century. The Italian influence in England of the Jacobean period had given place to French influence in dress and hair-styles. Even before the Restoration there was considerable traffic in ideas between the two countries and French romances of Madeleine Scudery and others had become popular in England. The political conditions of the Restoration had brought France still closer to England. There was wholesale pilfering by Restoration dramatists of plots from French romances and dramas. That the 'heroic' plays of the Restoration were the direct result of French influence has never been denied. Nor can the influence of the King and his court be entirely ignored. Men of letters enjoyed the patronage of the great and no doubt tried to please them. In short, France did exercise considerable influence, though this has been much exaggerated in the past. But even so, this influence by itself does not wholly account for the change.

There were other causes. The real cause was dissatisfaction with the literature of the preceding age. The exuberant spirit of the Ren-

aisance had lasted far too long and in the nature of things could not last indefinitely. The Elizabethan inspiration had waned. The passions that had surged and soared in Shakespeare and Webster had degenerated into mere sensationalism in their successors. The Arcadian fancies of Sidney and Spenser had sunk into the fantastic conceits and obscurities of Donne and his Metaphysical school. The verse too of Marlowe and Shakespeare had lost its way in the crabbed metres of Donne and loose and incoherent couplets of Davenant, Chamberlayne and others. Even prose which had touched magnificent heights in Milton and Browne was on the whole too opulent and pompous for the ordinary business of daily life. All these excesses provoked a revolt. There was a general desire for reform.

Besides, there was a revolt against Puritanism. The Puritans for all their fanaticism had at least kept up certain standards of decency and honesty. But the strong reaction against Puritanism that set in with the Restoration swept off not only the rigid restraints it had imposed upon innocent pleasures but along with them even ordinary decency and moderation. There was a deplorable degradation of morals, which added to the degradation of literature.

We may now proceed to consider the writers who brought about this change. They are Dryden, Butler, Earl of Dorset, Earl of Rochester, Sir Charles Sedley and Mrs. Aphra Behn, in poetry; Dryden, Sir William Temple, Archbishop Tillotson, Lord Halifax and Bishop Sprat in prose; Dryden, Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar in drama. Dryden heads the list in all the three branches. Let us take up poetry first.

Restoration Poetry: Dryden

Dryden was the greatest man of letters of his time. He was not only its greatest poet, but also its greatest prosewriter and (by stretching a point) its greatest dramatist. This rare combination of gifts makes him a unique figure in English literature, for no other writer so completely dominated his own age as Dryden did his.

Life. John Dryden was born in 1631 in a respectable and well-connected country family. He was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. His earliest poems were the *Heroic stanzas on the Death of Oliver Cromwell* and *Aestraea Redux* or the Happy Restoration of Charles II. He seems to have had no difficulty in changing sides so quickly. (He married an Earl's daughter (1663) and had three sons. Though he had a small estate, he was not rich and to supplement his income began writing for the stage, which continued to be his main occupation for about fifteen years. The plague drove him to the country where he wrote his famous *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* and a poem on the Great Fire of London and the Dutch War—*Annus Mirabilis* (Wonderful Year)—both in 1666. In 1670 he was appointed poet laureate in succession to Davenant. In the height of excitement following the Popish Plot he produced his first great satire *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), following it up with

two others, *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe* (1682). After these came the two theological poems *Religio Laici* (1682), a defence of the Church of England and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) a defence of the Roman Catholic Church to which he had been converted soon after the accession of the Catholic James II. As a result of this when the Revolution came he lost his post of poet laureate and other offices. All hopes of official preferment destroyed, he fell back on his literary pursuits. During the remaining twelve years of his life he produced a few more plays and a number of translations the most famous of which are his *Virgil* and the *Fables*. He died in May 1700 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.)

Dryden's character has been the subject of adverse comment. The facts of his life provide ample reason for this. He seems to have been without any fixed religious or political principles, which were adopted or dropped as suited his interests. He enjoyed the friendship and patronage of the great, including the king. He had his share of private and public quarrels and was on one occasion waylaid and beaten by ruffians hired by his former friend Rochester. He was not above the hardness or coarseness of the times in his satires and plays, but was otherwise gentle, modest, and generous of praise where it was due. At his death when the hostility he had provoked by his religious and political controversies had died down, he was universally acknowledged not only the greatest poet but also the greatest man of letters of his age.

Dryden's Poetical Works. The minor poems of Dryden being occasional were produced at different times during the whole of his literary career extending over a period of more than forty years. The major ones were all written during the last twenty years of his life. Let us first discuss the minor poems.

(1) *Heroic stanzas on the Death of Cromwell*. This is in quatrains or the four-line stanzas familiar to all in Gray's *Elegy*.

(2) *Astraea Redux* on the return of Charles II. This is in heroic couplets.

(3) *Annus Mirabilis* on the Great Fire of London and the Dutch War. This is in quatrains described above in (1).

(4) *Threnodia Augustalis* on the death of Charles II. This is in Pindaric stanzas i.e., stanzas in complicated and irregular rhymes first attempted by Cowley.

(5) *Britannia Rediviva* on the birth of James II's son, the Old Pretender. This is in heroic couplets.

(6) *Ode on Mrs Killigrew*. This is in Pindarics as (4) above.

(7) *Song on St. Cecilia's Day* (1687). Pindarics.

(8) *Alexander's Feast* (1697). Pindarics.

With the exception of (6), (7) and (8), these have no permanent in-

terest. Their significance was topical and has passed away with the special occasions for which they were written. The last three, the *Ode on Mrs Killigrew*, the *Song on St. Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast* are, however, still fresh in their lyrical beauty and testify to a gift which Dryden did not exploit to the full. *Alexander's Feast*, especially, is one of the most powerful poems in the language and cannot be over-praised. The power of music which is its theme has never been more brilliantly displayed. It is a splendid illustration of sound echoing the sense. Besides these three famous lyrics, there are a number of admirable songs scattered through the plays. The minor poems have the added interest of showing that Dryden could competently and effectively handle other metres too besides the couplet in which he achieved his greatest triumphs.

Major Poems. The poems which contain Dryden's best work and which are all written in the heroic or decasyllabic couplet are: (1) the three satires—*Absalom and Achitophel*, *The Medal* and *MacFlecknoe*; (2) the two religious poems—*Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*; and (3) the miscellaneous translations of which the most famous are the *Virgil* and the *Fables*.

The Satires. The immediate circumstances that brought forth these satires were as follows. The bogus Popish Plot provided the anti-Catholics with a capital opportunity to whip up agitation not only against all Catholics but also against the Catholic James who was to succeed to the throne after Charles. The Exclusion Bill, aimed at excluding him from the succession was, however, killed by the king's abrupt dissolution of Parliament. The Whigs then resorted to desperate acts of treason including an attempt on the life of the King and his brother. The unscrupulous Earl of Shaftesbury, their leader, even attempted to set up the Duke of Monmouth as successor to the throne. These intrigues being discovered, several prominent Whigs were sent to the scaffold. Shaftesbury himself was arrested and tried, but was acquitted. The Whigs hailed him as a hero and struck a medal in his honour. It was in such a tense atmosphere that *Absalom and Achitophel* appeared (1681). It debunked Shaftesbury, who having been thoroughly exposed, fled to Holland where he died in exile. But Dryden didn't relent and returned to the attack in *The Medal* (1682). Shadwell a former friend of Dryden's replied in *The Medal of John Bayes*. Dryden replied with a savage counter-attack on Shadwell in *MacFlecknoe* (1682). It was followed, shortly after, by the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel* in which Dryden contributed only 200 lines, the rest being Naham Tate's. Dryden satirised Elkanah Settle (a popular dramatist and rival) as Doeg and Shadwell again as Og.

Absalom and Achitophel is the most brilliant political satire in English. The satire is disguised as a Biblical allegory in which Charles II is David, Monmouth Absalom and Shaftesbury, his evil counsellor, Achitophel. Its choice diction, smooth versification, its brilliant wit and above all, its incomparable portraits of Shaftes-

bury and Buckingham (Zimri) make it one of the most entertaining things in English literature. The attack on Shadwell in *MacFlecknoe* is not far behind, being a classic of satirical contempt. The extracts that follow will give some idea of Dryden's brilliance as a satirist.

Here is how *Absalom and Achitophel* begins—

In pious times, e'r Priest-craft did begin,
Before *Polygamy* was made a Sin;
When Man on many multipli'd his kind,
E'r one to one was cursedly confin'd,
When Nature prompted and no Law deni'd
Promiscuous Use of Concubine and Bride;
Then *Israel's* Monarch, after Heavens own heart,
His vigorous warmth did, variously, impart
To Wives and Slaves: And, wide as his Command,
Scatter'd his Maker's Image through the Land.

The character of Shaftesbury—

Of these the false *Achitophel* was first,
A Name to all succeeding Ages curst
For close Designs and crooked Counsels fit,
Sagacious, Bold, and Turbulent of wit,
Restless, unfixt in Principles and Place,
In Pow'r unpleased impatient of Disgrace;
A fiery Soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the Pigmy Body to decay:
An o'r informed the Tenement of Clay.
A daring Pilot in extremity;
Pleas'd with the Danger, when the Waves went high
He sought the Storms; but, for a Calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the Sands to boast his Wit.
Great Wits are sure to Madness near alli'd
And thin Partitions do their Bounds divide;
Else, why should he, with Wealth and Honour blest,
Refuse his Age the needful hours of Rest?
Punish a Body which he could not please,
Bankrupt of Life, yet Prodigal of Ease?
And all to leave what with his Toil he won
To that unfeather'd two-legg'd thing, a Son :
Got, while his Soul did huddled Notions trie;
And born a shapeless Lump, like Anarchy.
In Friendship false, implacable in Hate,
Resolv'd to Ruine or to Rule the State,
To Compass this the Triple Bond he broke,
The Pillars of the Publick Safety shook,
And fitted *Israel* for a Foreign Yoke,
Then, seiz'd with Fear, yet still affecting Fame,
Usurp'd a Patriot's All-attoning Name.
So easie still it proves in Factious Times
With publick Zeal to cancel private Crimes:

Shaftesbury's exhortation to Monmouth—

Believe me, Royal Youth, the Fruit must be
Or gather'd Ripe, or rot upon the Tree.
Heav'n has to all allotted, soon or late,
Some lucky Revolution of their Fate:

Whose Motions, if we watch and guide with Skill,
 (For humane Good depends on humane Will,)
 Our Fortune rolls as from a smooth Descent
 And, from the first impression, takes the Bent;
 But, if unseize'd, she glides away like wind;
 And leaves repenting Folly far behind.
 Now, now she meets you with a glorious prize
 And spreads her Locks before her as she flies.
 Had thus Old *David*, from whose Loins you spring,
 Not dar'd, when Fortune call'd him, to be King.
 At *Gath* an Exile he might still remain,
 And Heavens Anointing Oil had been in vain.
 Let his successful Youth your hopes engage,
 But shun th' example of Declining Age.
 Behold him setting in his Western Skies,
 The Shadows lengthening as the Vapours rise.
 He is not now, as when, on Jordan's Sand,
 The Joyful People throng'd to see him Land,
 Cov'ring the Beach and blackening all the Strand:

The Duke of Buckingham—

Some of their Chiefs were Princes of the Land,
 In the first Rank of these did *Zimri* stand:
 A man so various, that he seem'd to be
 Not one, but all Mankind's Epitome.
 Stiff in Opinions, always in the wrong;
 Was Everything by starts, and Nothing long:
 But in the course of one revolving Moon,
 Was Chymist, Fidler, States-man, and Buffoon:
 Then all for Women. Painting, Rhiming, Drinking,
 Besides ten thousand Freaks that died in thinking.

Here is a caricature of Shadwell—

All humane things are subject to decay,
 And, when Fate summons, Monarchs must obey:
 This *Flecknoe* found, who, like *Augustus*, young
 Was call'd to Empire and had govern'd long:
 In Prose and Verse was own'd, without dispute
 Through all the realms of Non-sense, absolute.
 This aged Prince now flourishing in Peace,
 And blest with issue of a large increase,
 Worn out with business, did at length debate
 To settle the Succession of the State;
 And pond'ring which of all his Sons was fit
 To Reign, and wage immortal War with Wit,
 Cry'd, 'tis resolved: for Nature pleads that He
 Should *onely* rule, who most resembles me:
Sh (adwell) alone my perfect image bears,
 Mature in dullness from his tender years;
Sh(adwell) alone of all my Sons is he
 Who stands confirm'd in full stupidity.
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
 But *Sh(adwell)* never deviates into sense.
 Some Beams of Wit on other souls may fall
 Strike through and make a lucid intervall;
 But *Sh(adwell)*'s genuine night admits no ray,
 His rising Fogs prevail upon the Days:
 Besides, his goodly Fabrick fills the eye

And seems design'd for thoughtless Majesty:
 Thoughtless as Monarch Oakes that shade the plain,
 And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and *Shirley* were but Types of thee,
 Thou last great Prophet of Tautology:
 Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
 Was sent before but to prepare thy way:

(From *MacFlecknoe*)

The Religious Poems. From political controversy to religious controversy was a natural step, for religion and politics were inextricably mixed in that age. The two religious poems of Dryden have nothing devotional or spiritual about them, but are simply arguments in verse for or against this or that Church. *Religio Laici* (the religion of a layman) came out about the same time as Dryden's last satire, in 1682. It is a defence of the Church of England against that of Rome. *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) was the result of his conversion to the catholic church and is a defence of that church against the Church of England. The various Christian sects are represented by different beasts. This is certainly odd and has been much ridiculed. The 'milk-white Hind' is the Roman Church and the fierce Panther the Anglican. The poems have little interest for the average reader of today and are only remarkable for their exhibiting Dryden's astonishing power of arguing in verse.

Translations. Of Dryden's translations the two most popular are the *Virgil* (1697) and the *Fables* (1699). Dryden's translations are not literal but free and loose—more in the nature of paraphrases. His *Virgil* is still a favourite, though several other translations are now in the field. The *Fables*, which are made up chiefly of tales from Chaucer and Boccaccio, have the added interest of the famous Preface. This is noticed under Dryden's prose.

It will be seen that all the major works of Dryden are in the heroic couplet. His long practice in writing rhymed or heroic plays had given him an easy command of the couplet which he brought to perfection in the satires and other later poems. Pope, it is generally maintained, further refined the couplet: but Dryden has one advantage over Pope. He breaks the monotony of his couplets by occasionally using triplets i.e., three lines rhyming together. As a satirist too Dryden is Pope's superior. While Pope shouts and screams in his satires, Dryden sails along with cool majesty even while delivering the most vicious thrusts at his enemies. In this as in other qualities he is the supreme satirist in English literature. Except in a few lyrical pieces already noticed, there is nothing in Dryden's poetry to capture the heart or fire the imagination, but in sheer intellectual brilliance and polished versification it is unrivalled in the Restoration Age.

Other Satirists

Great as Dryden is as a satirist, he is not the only one in his age.

There are others. The chief of these is Samuel Butler (1613-1680) whose *Hudibras* is about as famous as a religious satire as *Absalom and Achitophel* is as a political one. It is a bitter satire on Puritanism and was published in three parts successively in 1663, 1664 and 1678. It achieved immediate and enormous popularity. Charles II was so pleased with it that he rewarded the author with a handsome cash present. It did much to stimulate the tide of reaction against Puritanism. It relates the adventures or rather the misadventures of the Presbyterian Sir Hudibras and his servant Ralph. They are obviously modelled on Don Quixote and his squire Sancho, but the comic exaggeration of the parody is Rabelaisian. Butler had served as secretary to Sir Samuel Luke, a Presbyterian colonel who is said to be the origin of Sir Hudibras. The verse form is the octosyllabic couplet made deliberately rough in comic rhymes. This doggerel has come to be known as 'Hudibrastic' much like the 'Skeltonics' of the post-Chaucerian poet Skelton. Here is an example—

When civil dudgeon first grew high,
And men fell out, they knew not why :
When hard words, jealousies, and fears,
Set folks together by the ears,
And made them fight; like mad or drunk,
For Dame Religion as for punk;
Whose honesty they all durst swear for,
Though not a man of them knew wherefore :
When gospel-trumpeter, surrounded
With long-eared rout, to battle sounded,
And pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
Was beat with fist, instead of a stick :
Then did Sir Knight abandon dwelling,
And out he rode a-colonelling.

(From *Hudibras*)

While almost every characteristic of the fanatical 'saints' is ridiculed in the poem, their hypocrisy and selfrighteousness ('holier than thou' attitude) are the special targets of Butler's sarcasm. The poem has plenty of wit and humour. The comic exaggeration, however, is carried to excess and becomes tiresome. The poem would have gained considerably, had it been shorter. Nevertheless, the poem is unique as a burlesque and remains unapproached to this day for its ingenuity. Butler was undoubtedly a genius in satire.

Among the minor satirists only two deserve mention: Marvell and Oldham. Marvell, so attractive as a lyricist, became a ferocious satirist after the Restoration, attacking the profligacy and misrule of Charles II. John Oldham died at thirty, but produced a good deal of miscellaneous literature including violent satires upon the Jesuits.

Lyrics

There is little poetry outside the satire in this period. Dryden had a lyrical gift but produced only a few pieces already noticed. Grouped

round him are four lesser poets: Earl of Dorset, Earl of Rochester, Sir Charles Sedley, and Mrs Afra Behn. Only the last of these was a professional writer—a novelist and dramatist. The others were courtiers. They are remembered by a few love songs which link them with cavalier poets. Coarse as some of the songs are, they are the last of their kind in the 17th century. Nothing like them was to appear during the next hundred years.

CHAPTER 20

THE AGE OF DRYDEN: DRAMA

The unimportance of Restoration drama—The Restoration theatre—Restoration tragedy: The 'heroic' tragedy and Dryden's share in it—Blank verse tragedy: Dryden and Otway—The Minors—Restoration comedy: Etherege, Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, Farquhar—*The Beaux Stratagem*—The Minors—Jeremy Collier's attack on the Restoration stage.

One cannot be very enthusiastic about the Restoration drama. Its only distinction is unreality in the tragedy and immorality in the comedy. There is nothing in it to compare with the Elizabethan or Jacobean drama, except the brilliant wit of its comedy. Almost all of the Restoration drama has fallen into obscurity where it belongs, and a rapid survey is all that is called for.

Only a few months after the king's arrival, Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Devenant, obtained patents to start theatrical companies—the King's Players and the Duke of York's (later James II) players. Both these gentlemen were of the older generation and were links between the old and the new. The theatre founded by them was in several ways different from the Elizabethan. The Elizabethan theatre was thronged by all classes of people; the Restoration theatre was patronised almost exclusively by the aristocracy. The Puritan hostility to play-houses had instilled in the middle classes a pious horror of those places and they kept away. The royalists and their associates—the fashionable, gay crowd of rakes and pleasure seekers—found in the theatre a convenient platform for waging war against the Puritans by ridiculing the strict code of morality they had imposed on the country. This outburst of anti-Puritanism is reflected in the extreme licentiousness of Restoration comedy.

Another significant change was the use of scenery, movable and immovable, and stage 'machinery', which made the Restoration theatre more glamorous than the Elizabethan. To do this it was necessary to push back the projecting platform stage of the Elizabethan Theatre behind the proscenium arch. That was how the modern stage began, on which everything takes place away from the audience.

Still more significant was the appearance of actresses on the public stage. In the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods ladies had

taken parts only in court masques, which were private entertainments, but female parts on the public stage were always played by boys.

The Restoration theatre began with plays of the great Elizabethan period. Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher long continued to be favourites. Even Shakespeare was revived, but in novel adaptations to suit the taste of the times. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, was given a happy ending, as the frivolous audiences of the day could not bear the painful catastrophe. Even Dryden, the greatest admirer of Shakespeare, vulgarised the *Tempest* by adding coarse touches. Such travesties are enough to show that this unpoetical age did not deserve Shakespeare. Contemporary remarks on Shakespeare productions are revealing. The famous diarist Samuel Pepys found "*Romeo and Juliet* the first time it was ever acted, a play the worst that even I heard in my life", *Midsummer Night's Dream* "the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life", *Twelfth Night* "a silly play and not related at all to the name or day". And again Evelyn, another diarist: "I saw *Hamlet* played, but now old plays begin to disgust this refined age, since His Majesty's being abroad."

So 'this refined age' turned to French drama for models. The shining lights of French drama at this time were the comedian Moliere, and the tragedians Corneille and Racine, who made the reign of Louis XIV, the Grand Monarch, as glorious as Shakespeare and others had made the reign of Elizabeth. It is possible to exaggerate, as has been done by some, French influence on Restoration drama, but it may be admitted without needless hedging that the influence of Moliere in comedy and of Corneille (if not of Racine) in tragedy was considerable.

Tragedy

The tragedy that emerged at the Restoration was a peculiar phenomenon. It was called 'heroic' tragedy and was only near-tragedy. The theme of the heroic plays was based on the struggle between love and honour, the hero and heroine were cast on the grand scale, and their dialogue consisted of declamatory speeches, in rhymed decasyllabic couplets, full of rant and bombast of a kind for which it would be hard to find a parallel. What first amuses and then tires the reader is not the extravagance of the heroic feats so much as the extravagance of the protagonists' notions of love and honour, which are refined to the point of absurdity. The heroic play flourished for some twenty years and then died a natural death exhausted by its own excesses.

The origin of the heroic play is much in dispute. That it owed something to Corneille is certain. It is equally certain that it also owed something to the French heroic romances of writers like Madeleine de Scudery, which had been translated into English and were very popular in England for sometime. The characters of Cor-

neille have nobility and grandeur and his style though dignified is declamatory. The heroic romances of M. de Scudery are full of incredible adventures. But there is nothing either in Corneille or in Scudery to account for the excesses of the heroic plays. What is still more puzzling is the fact that, while the native reaction against the earlier period was entirely in the direction of good sense and simplicity of expression, the heroic plays went in the opposite direction and defied both commonsense and natural expression. The true explanation would seem to be that the writers made up their lack of poetry by pomposity. Also probably this singular unheroic age found compensation for its lack of heroism in the artificial and inflated heroes and heroines of these plays:

As early as 1656, Davenant, who had some influence with the Commonwealth government, had produced at Rutland House a play *The Siege of Rhodes* which was half opera (musical play or sung drama) and half a heroic play in rhymed verse. But the man who excelled above all in this kind was Dryden. This is not surprising considering his mastery of the couplet which because of its use in heroic poetry came to be called 'heroic' couplet. It had been so used in Davenant's *Gondibert* and Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida*—both heroic poems. The brilliant success of his *Conquest of Granada* led to Dryden and the heroic play being parodied in *The Rehearsal*, a skit by a group of wits headed by the Duke of Buckingham. Though this did not kill the heroic play immediately, it had a sobering effect. Dryden who had defended the heroic play in his preface to *The Conquest of Granada* and the use of rhyme in drama in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* had criticism enough to see the justice of the attack. He turned to the Elizabethan tradition and wrote blank verse tragedies of which *All for Love*, an independent treatment of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, is the best and may still be read with pleasure. But the real spirit of Elizabethan tragedy was caught by Thomas Otway (1652-85) in *The Orphan* and still more in *Venice Preserved* which latter continued to be produced till well into the 19th century. Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*, also in blank verse, though unimportant, is remembered for two familiar quotations—

Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast.

Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned.

Other tragic dramatists of Charles II's time who deserve honourable mention are John Crowne, Elkanah Settle, and Nathaniel Lee—a major among the minors. Thomas Southerne and Nicholas Rowe belong to Queen Anne's reign. Rowe (1673-1718) who became poet laureate on the accession of George I has a special claim on our memory first because he was the first editor of Shakespeare, and secondly because his blank verse tragedy *The Fair Penitent* has given us in its wicked hero 'gay Lothario', a proverbial expression for a heartless rake. To sum up, the tragedy of the Restoration is, on the whole,

unimportant though curious. Even its two great plays *All for Love* and *Venice Preserved* are inferior to those of the Elizabethans. The reason is not difficult to see. Tragedy needs poetry and poetry was the very thing in which this age was so deficient.

Comedy

. As compared with its tragedy, the comedy of the Restoration achieved greater distinction—and shame. It was the most characteristic product of Restoration literature and reflects the spirit of the age more completely than either its prose or poetry. Dryden, who was in the van of every new literary venture, was the first to attempt it with his *Wild Gallant* which was a failure. He wrote several others which were more successful, but only one of them *Marriage a la Mode* can be said to have some life. He was not really fitted to write comedy and he admitted as much. The comedy of the Restoration *par excellence* was begun by two court wits Sir George Etherege (1634-91) and William Wycherley (1640-1716) and brought to its highest perfection in the reign of William III by William Congreve (1670-1729), Sir John Vanbrugh (d. 1726), and George Farquhar (1678-1707). Here again, though the French influence—that of Moliere—is unmistakable, the Restoration Comedy was fundamentally based on the native tradition of the 'humour comedy of Ben Jonson and to some extent on that of Beaumont and Fletcher. Being 'realistic' comedy it was written, for the most part, in prose which, following French ideals, is neat, lucid, and highly polished. But its extreme immorality must be put down to the native reaction against the Puritans as well as to the actual profligacy of the Court and the courtiers. It lasted beyond the Restoration period proper into the reign of the Queen Anne when, in fact, the society that had given it birth had declined, if not disappeared altogether.

The appeal of this comedy depends, first on love intrigue, and secondly on witty dialogue. Called the Comedy of Manners, it portrays the manners and morals of the society of the day. It is more appropriately called Artificial Comedy in that it only reflects the artificial culture of the sophisticated upper classes. Moliere portrayed the fads and follies of French society as a whole, but the English dramatists of the Restoration made their Comedy of Manners a class drama confined to the wits and gallants of the Court and courtly circles. How depraved this society was may be seen in the open, unabashed scenes of lust and seduction that were exhibited on the stage. Such obscenity was considered smart, while chastity and faithfulness in man or woman were held up to ridicule.

The Comedies may now be summarised.

Etherege. *Love in a Tub, She Would if She Could, The Man of Mode* or *Sir Fopling Flutter* (his best).

Wycherley. *Love in a Wood, The Country Wife, The Plain Dealer.* The choice for the first place would lie between second and third.

The plain Dealer is based on Moliere's *Misanthrope*.

Congreve. *The Old Bachelor, The Double Dealer, Love for Love, The Way of the World* (his masterpiece).

Vanbrugh. *The Relapse, The Provok'd Wife, The Confederacy* (his best).

Farquhar. *Love and a Bottle, The Constant Couple, or A Trip to the Jubilee, Sir Harry Wildair, The Inconstant, The Way to Win Him, The Recruiting Officer, The Beaux Stratagem* (his masterpiece and the best of all Restoration comedies).

A detailed discussion of the authors is ruled out in our plan. They may be disposed of in a few general remarks. They are all smutty, cynical, and witty—some more, some less. Etherege and Wycherley were both educated in France and were well qualified to create the comedy of manners. From his intimate knowledge of Parisian life Etherege was able to create a prince of fops in Sir Fopling Flutter. Wycherley is brutally cynical with overtones of moral feeling in his savage denunciations of the insincerities and hypocrisies of social intercourse (*The Plain Dealer*). Congreve, noted for his brilliant wit, is considered the best of the whole group. *The Way of the World* is the darling of the high-brows. Millimant, the coquetish heroine is a classic of her kind and the wit combats between her and Mirabell recall Shakespeare's Benedick and Beatrice. But the plot is too complicated to be intelligible. Vanbrugh excels in comicality (Lord Foppington in *The Relapse*), and departs from the Restoration norm by replacing fine lords and ladies by middle class characters. Farquhar, the last, youngest, and the most prolific of all was also the least literary of comic writers. Because of this or in spite of this, he achieved greater success in this line than any other of this group, Congreve not excepted. His *Beaux Stratagem* (1703) is far and away the best comedy of the Restoration. Its liveliness, humour, and boisterousness give it a life which no other Restoration comedy can claim. And incidentally, it is the least objectionable on moral grounds. Here is the plot.

The Beaux Stratagem: Aimwell and Archer, two dashing young gentlemen of London, who have run through their money, decide to ride out into the country to rehabilitate their fortunes by rich marriages. They arrive at an inn where Aimwell passes as a lord with Archer as his servant. Luck throws two rich ladies in their way—Dorinda, the lovely young daughter of Lady Bountiful, and Mrs. Sullen, her daughter-in-law who is yoked to a sottish husband who is too much of a sluggard to remember his duties to his newly wed wife. Dorinda falls in love with Aimwell and Mrs. Sullen with Archer. The gallants gain entry into their house on the pretext of Aimwell's sudden illness which, however, is cured miraculously on his squeezing the hand of the lovely Dorinda. Archer contrives to hide himself in Mrs. Sullen's bedroom at night. Overcome by his charm Mrs. Sullen has decided on a lapse from virtue. Lying on her bed and sighing she is conjuring his vision... "Suppose him here, dressed like a youthful, gay and burning bridegroom, with tongue enchanting, eyes bewitching, knees imploring..." Archer comes out of his hiding place and is about to fulfil her wishes when at the last moment an attack of conscience saves her from losing her virtue. At this critical moment the house is attacked by robbers but the ladies are rescued by Aimwell and Archer. Full of

gratitude the ladies are in the melting mood, and the rescuers press their advantage. Aimwell proposes to Dorinda, but confesses he is no lord but only a lord's younger brother. Dorinda accepts him for himself.

There are other developments. Mrs. Sullen's brother, who has been summoned to free her from her disgusting husband, arrives and forces Sullen to agree to the dissolution of his marriage, which leaves Mrs. Sullen free to marry Archer. He has also brought news of the death of Lord Aimwell and of Aimwell's succession to the title and estate. The play ends happily with a dance in which everybody joins, Sullen alone keeping out.

Among the lesser writers of Restoration comedy may be mentioned Sir Charles Sedley, Thomas Shadwell, John Crowne, Tom D'urfy, Mrs. Aphra Behn, and Colley Cibber, the poet laureate, who has left us an autobiography which is at the same time a delightful history of the Restoration theatre.

In 1698 Jeremy Collier, a clergyman, attacked the Restoration drama in a pamphlet entitled *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*. As the general public was behind him, the pamphlet had the desired effect. Dryden pleaded guilty while others made only lame excuses. The drama was reformed. Comedy became first less vicious, then moral and sentimental, and dull. This new attitude determined the course of the drama through the whole of the next century.

CHAPTER 21

THE AGE OF DRYDEN: PROSE

Character of Restoration prose—The Royal Society and the new prose style—Its pioneers: Dryden, Temple, Halifax, Tillotson, Sprat—Bunyan—His four great books—*The Pilgrim's Progress*, a novel—The Diarists: Evelyn, Pepys, Roger North.

We have spoken disparagingly of Restoration drama and have given only mild praise to its poetry. Its achievement in prose is more praiseworthy. In fact, the prose of this period marks the real beginning of modern prose. There was a general reaction against the swelling prose style of Milton and Browne, which could not meet the needs of a practical and utilitarian age that began at the Restoration. Calling itself 'classical', it looked for a simpler, more business-like instrument. The new age had also a scientific outlook. The scientific spirit stimulated by Bacon had been halted during the Civil war, but it was revived after the Restoration by the foundation in 1662 of the Royal Society for the Improvement of Knowledge. Among its early members it included eminent men of letters as well as scientists. One of its objects was the improvement of English prose. It demanded of all its members "a close, naked, natural way of speaking... as near the mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants before that of wits or scholars." The desire for such a change being in the air a number of writers began writing in the new style. These were Dryden, Sir William Temple, George Savile (Marquiss of Halifax), Bishop Tillotson, and Bishop Sprat.

Dryden, the greatest poet of the period, is also its greatest prose writer. His prose writings, all critical, took the form of essays, prefaces, dedications, prologues and the like, appended to his poetical and dramatic works. The two most famous are the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (the only independent work) and the *Preface to the Fables*. The *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) is in the form of a dialogue between four friends with classical names including Dryden himself (Neander). They discuss the comparative merits of the classical, French, Elizabethan, and the new English drama. The most interesting parts are Dryden's defence of the use of rhyme in the

the drama and his famous praise of Shakespeare. The *Essay* is of the greatest importance as the first orderly work of practical literary criticism. Dr. Johnson was only being just when he called Dryden the father of English criticism. It is at the same time a typical example of the new prose style—plain, familiar, but elegant and forceful. It is miles removed from the inflated pre-Restoration variety and is in every sense modern.

The *Preface to the Fables* is, if anything, even more delightful than the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. The style here is more conversational, even colloquial at times, almost as of the personal essay. The highlight of the piece is the author's appreciation of Chaucer's personality and genius. In spite of Dryden's misunderstanding of Chaucer's versification, the *Preface*, like the *Essay*, is a landmark in the history of practical English criticism.)

Extracts follow—

Shakespeare and Ben Jonson

To begin, then, with *Shakespeare*. He was the man who of all Modern, and perhaps Ancient Poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the Images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned, he needed not the spectacles of Books to read Nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of Mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his Comick wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into Bombast. But he is always great when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets, *Quantum Lenta solent inter viburna cupressi*. The consideration of this made Mr. *Hales of Eton* say, that there was no subject of which any poet ever writ but he would produce it much better treated of in *Shakespeare*; and however others are now generally preferred before him, yet the age wherein he lived, which had contemporaries with him, *Fletcher* and *Jonson*, never equalled them to him in their esteem: and in the last King's court, when *Ben's* reputation was at highest, Sir *John Suckling*, and with him the greater part of the Courtiers, set our *Shakespeare* far above him. . . .

As for *Jonson*, to whose Character I am now arrived if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last Plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious Writer which any Theatre ever had. He was a most severe Judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and Language and Humour also in some measure, we had before him; but something of Art was wanting to the *Drama* till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making Love in any of Scenes, or endeavouring to move the Passions, his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such an height. Humour was his proper Sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent Mechanick people. He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them: there is scarce a Poet or Historian among the Roman Authors of those times whom he has not translated in *Sejanus* and *Catiline*. But he has done his Robberies so openly that one may see he fears not to be fixed by any Law. He invades Authors like a Monarch; and what would be theft in

other Poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of these Writers he so represents old *Rome* to us, in its Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs, that if one of their Poets had written either of his Tragedies we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his Language 'twas that he weaved it too closely and laboriously in his serious Plays: perhaps, too, he did a little too much Romanize our Tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them: wherein though he learnedly followed the Idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours. If I would compare him with *Shakespeare*, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but *Shakespeare* the greater wit. *Shakespeare* was the *Homer*, or father of our Dramatick Poets; *Jonson* was the *Virgil*, the pattern of elaborate writing, I admire him, but I love *Shakespeare*.

(From *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*)

Chaucer

He must have been a Man of a most wonderful comprehensive Nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various Manners and Humours (as we now call them) of the whole *English Nation*, in his Age. Not a single Character has escaped him. All his Pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. *Baptista Porta* could not have described their natures better than by the marks which the Poet gives them. The Matter and Manner of their Tales, and of their Telling, are so suited to their different Education, Humours, and Callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious Characters are distinguished by their several sorts of Gravity: their Discourses are such as belong to their Age, their Calling, and their Breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his Persons are vicious, and some Virtuous; some are unlearned, or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the Low Characters is different: the *Reeve*, the *Miller*, and the *Cook*, are several men, and distinguished from each other as much as the mincing *Lady-Prioress* and the broad-speaking, gaptoothed Wife of *Bath*. But enough of this; there is such a variety of Game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my Choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the Proverb, that *here is God's plenty*.

(From *Preface to the Fables*)

Dryden Grown Old

I have added some Original Papers of my own, which whether they are equal or inferior to my other Poems, an Author is the most improper Judge; and therefore I leave them wholly to the Mercy of the Reader. I will hope the best, that they will not be condemned, but if they should, I have the Excuse of an old Gentleman, who, mounting on Horseback before some Ladies, when I was present, got up somewhat heavily, but desired of the Fair Spectators that they would count Fourscore and eight before they judged him. But the Mercy of his Number, a Cripple in my Limbs; but what Decays are in my Mind, the Reader must determine. I think myself as vigorous as ever in the Faculties of my Soul, excepting only my Memory, which is not impaired to any great degree; and if I lose not more of it, I have no great reason to complain. What Judgment I had, increases rather than diminishes, and Thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only Difficulty is to chuse or to reject; to run them into Verse or to give them the other harmony of Prose: I have so long studied and practised both; that they are grown into a Habit, and become familiar to me. In short, though I may lawfully plead some part of the old Gentleman's Excuse, yet I will reserve it till, I think I have greater need, and ask no Grains of Allowance for the Faults of this my present Work, but those which are given of course to Humane Frailty.

(From *Preface to the Fables*)

Dryden, though the greatest all-round writer of his age, did not so completely eclipse others in prose as he did in poetry and drama. He wrote only on one subject, *viz.*, criticism. They had larger and more varied interests.

Temple (1628-99) was a diplomat as well as a scholar who has left some very charming essays. The literary or personal essays in the manner of Montaigne were first written by Cowley, whose essay of *Myself* is so well known. Temple was another pioneer of the essay. His famous essay on Poetry ends with a sentence that has become classic—"When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over." There is nothing even in Dryden to equal such music.

The writings of Halifax are mostly political, the most notable piece being his *Character of a Trimmer* or moderator who 'trims' the extremes and finds a *via media*. The piece entitled *Advice to a Daughter* is more personal. His prose is a mixture of the old and the new.

Tillotson (1630-94), Archbishop of Canterbury, in his sermons and 'Reflections' is simple enough in an unsimple way, being very fond of rather far-fetched metaphors which become wearisome. He is remembered because of Dryden's remark that he owed much to Tillotson in point of style. Tillotson's style shows little to deserve such praise.

Bishop Sprat (1635-1713) who wrote the *History of the Royal Society* (1667) is more truly representative of the plain, straightforward style advocated in the famous manifesto.

Bunyan (1628-88). While Dryden and others of the group just discussed were all scholars and are important as pioneers of the new prose-style, the man who wrote the greatest book of the later 17th century was neither a scholar nor a pioneer of any style but his own. John Bunyan, a tinker by trade and of humble birth had only a rudimentary education. After serving as a soldier in the Parliamentary Army he joined a Puritan sect and soon took to preaching. As a preacher he became involved in a sectarian controversy with the Quakers and produced several books. In 1660, he was arrested for preaching—preaching by Dissenters being prohibited—and was sent to jail where he remained for twelve years until the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672. While in jail he produced a number of books the chief of which was his *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666). In 1675 when the Declaration was revoked, he was again arrested and imprisoned for a short period. It was during this second imprisonment that he wrote the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to come*, which completed with the second part appeared in 1678. Bunyan was a voluminous writer, having produced as many as sixty books, large and small. Out of these the most outstanding are: *Grace Abounding*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682).

All the above four are allegories. *Grace Abounding* relates, no doubt with conventional exaggeration, the sins of Bunyan's youth, his gradual awakening to God and religion and final call to preaching. *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* is a dialogue between Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive in which the former relates the life of Mr. Badman recently deceased. The rascalities of Mr. Badman follow the usual pattern indicated by his name. The Story is interesting as well as instructive. *The Holy War* describes the war between Mansoul (Man's soul) and Diabolus (the Devil). The conflict between the good and the bad impulses in man ends with the triumph of the good.

The Pilgrim's Progress. The allegory in this, Bunyan's masterpiece, is in the form of a dream. Christian flees from the City of Destruction to take refuge in the Celestial City. As his wife and children refuse to accompany him, he decides to go it alone. The scenes and characters he meets on the way have become classic. The Slough of Despond, Vanity Fair and Valley of the Shadow of Death are familiar expressions. Equally well-known are some of the characters: Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Faithful, Hopeful, Giant Despair and the fiend Apollyon. Part II narrates the same pilgrimage undertaken by Christian's wife Christiana together with her children. They are accompanied by Mercy and escorted by Great-Heart who overcomes Giant Despair and reaches them to their destination.

The greatness as well as the popularity of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is attested by the fact that it has been translated into more than a hundred languages. Its appeal to the human mind is universal and not confined to Christians, for the idea that human life is a toilsome pilgrimage from this world to the next is common to religious thought everywhere. Besides, the book has an absorbing story interest and can be read by young and old alike regardless of its religious meaning. Its literary merit consists in the almost childlike simplicity of its language dignified by the phraseology of the Bible, which the author knew by heart. Indeed, there is little evidence that Bunyan had read any other ancient or modern authors beyond a couple of devotional books popular in his day. The characters, the narrative, the spiritual truths—all are made vivid by homely illustrations drawn from the ordinary life of the people. If Milton is the greatest exponent of the puritan faith in verse, Bunyan is his counterpart in prose. Highbrows may belittle the book, but *The Pilgrim's Progress* has gone to the hearts of millions who haven't even heard of Dryden or Temple.

The question whether *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a novel or not is often debated. Orthodox criticism debars it from that category on two grounds: first that it is an allegory, second that it is religious. Neither objection has any validity. An allegory is a form of fiction and a religious novel is still a novel. Neither its allegorical form nor its religious theme makes it anything else but a novel. The characters of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are real and far removed from the pale shadows of *Roman de la Rose* and *The Fairy Queen*.

The Diarists

A new division of prose writing developed at this time was provided by the diarists of whom the important are Evelyn, Pepys, and North.

John Evelyn (1620-1706) was a rich, highly cultivated gentleman of wide interests. He was a member of the Royal Society and wrote extensively on gardening, agriculture, forestry, architecture, navigation, etc. But he is remembered chiefly by his *Diary*. It covers almost the whole of his life and is a valuable document of social history of the time, containing as it does graphic descriptions of events and personalities of the day. His style is simple, self-conscious, and scholarly, but has no distinctive individuality, except now and then, as in his descriptions of the Galley Slaves and the Great Fire, where it rises to strength and colour.

Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), the most famous diarist of history was a well-connected gentleman of the middle class who was employed in the civil service in which he rose to be secretary of the Navy. He was President of the Royal Society and a member of Parliament. Like his friend Evelyn, he had versatile tastes and was interested in art, science, literature and music. His *Diary* beginning 1 January 1660 and covering a period of nearly ten years was written in code which was not deciphered till 1825. Its publication was an event. The frankness with which it records every minute detail of the author's daily life is simply astounding. The picture that emerges from the *Diary* is very different from that of a 'Universally respected' person of history. It shows him vain, frivolous, mean, selfish, brutal, and an unscrupulous libertine who did not hesitate to use his official position to gratify his lust. Confession, they say, is good for the soul but bad for reputation. The shocking self-revelations of the *Diary* have certainly damaged Pepys's reputation as a man, but have raised his estimate as a writer. There is, of course, nothing in his racy, telegraphic sentences which can be called style. What is fascinating about Pepys is the utter absence of self-consciousness in his self-revelation. We wonder whether he was writing of himself or of somebody else. *The Diary* may not be literature, but it is the kind of stuff of which literature is made.

Roger North (1653-1734), a Tory gentleman, belonged to a great family that played an important role in the history and politics of the time. He owes his assured place here to his excellent lives of his three famous kinsmen and an Autobiography, now collected under the general title of *North's Lives of the Norths*. The portraits he has drawn are enlivened with delightful anecdotes. The style is a mixture of the old and the new with colloquialisms and slang interspersed.

CHAPTER 22

THE AUGUSTAN AGE: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Queen Anne 1702-1714, George I 1714-1727,
George II 1727-1760, George III 1760-1820.

Queen Anne

The 18th Century in England opens with the war of Spanish succession. William having died, the conduct of the war was entrusted to Churchill, later Duke of Marlborough. Though Marlborough was mean, greedy and even traitorous, he was a great military genius. He beat the French in four great battles, the most famous of which was the battle of Blenheim in Bavaria (1704) which saved Austria. The other three—Ramillies, Oudernarde and Malplaquet—were in the Netherlands. The war ended in 1713 with the Treaty of Utrecht (Netherlands). Though the principal objective of the war, namely, ousting Louis's grandson Phillip from the Spanish throne was not attained, his inheritance was partitioned. His Spanish dominions in Europe including Spanish Netherlands passed to Austria, while he retained Spain and her American colonies. The Grand Monarch was considerably weakened and humbled. The British gained two ports—Gibraltar and Minorca in the Mediterranean, two colonies—Novascotia and St. Kits in America, and also a valuable trade concession, viz. the sole right of shipping slaves to the Spanish colonies.

In spite of the Act of Settlement of 1701 by which succession to the English throne after Anne was to pass to the Electress Sophia of Hanover, grand-daughter of James I, it was doubtful if Scotland would agree to accept the Hanoverians. Scotland had many grievances against England, the chief being that the Scots were denied the right of trading with England or her colonies. To win over Scotland, the British government guaranteed to the Scots the same trading rights with England and her colonies as were enjoyed by Englishmen. In 1707 the Act of Union was passed uniting England and Scotland to form Great Britain.

George I and George II

Queen Anne died in 1714 and George I of Hanover (son of the Electress Sophia and great grandson of James I) ascended the throne. The Jacobites were bitterly disappointed and attempted to overthrow the House of Hanover and put the son of James II, James Edward, on the throne. As the Scots and particularly the Highlanders had a special sentiment for the Stuarts, there was a rebellion in the Highlands in 1715. Few Englishmen joined it and it was easily put down and its leaders executed. It was a half-hearted affair, unplanned and with poor leadership. France and England being at peace at the time, no help came from there. James Edward, called Chevalier St. George in France and the Old Pretender in England, arrived in Scotland when the cause had been hopelessly lost, and beat a hasty retreat.

Thirty years after in 1745, in the reign of George II, a second and more serious attempt (the "Fortyfive") was made by the Jacobites to restore the Stuarts. The Old Pretender being too old himself, put forward his son, Charles Edward, as the claimant to the English throne. Prince Charles—the Bonnie Prince Charlie of the Highlands—young, handsome and smart evoked great response in the Highlands. No Englishmen joined him and though he expected French help—for France was at war with England (see below)—none came. In spite of these handicaps, he fought bravely at the head of Scottish troops and won some battles, but was routed at Culloden Moor near Inverness (1746). After extensive and romantic wanderings the Young Pretender escaped in female disguise to France.

The "Fifteen" and the "Fortyfive", though now remembered merely as romantic episodes in British history, had an important effect on its party politics. The Revolution Settlement which brought William and Mary as joint rulers of England was a triumph for the Whigs, but during their reign, as also under Queen Anne, the Whigs and Tories enjoyed Power more or less evenly, sometime one and sometime the other holding office according to the needs and circumstances of the moment. But throughout the reigns of George I and George II the Whigs had a monopoly of power for about fifty years. This was because all Tories or most of them were suspected of being Jacobites and hostile to the House of Hanover. It was only under George III that Tories came into power. For one thing, Jacobitism was dead by that time and the cloud of suspicion that had hung over them had cleared; for another, the King had been brought up to hate the Whigs as enemies of royal power.

The Tories, however, were well content to be governed by the Whig Oligarchy principally because Sir Robert Walpole, who became the first Prime Minister of England, was himself an easy going aristocrat, 'a jolly good fellow', and got on well with all classes including the Tory nobility. He held office under the first two Georges from 1721 to 1742 and distinguished himself as a great peace-time Prime Minister.

He was dedicated to peace at home and abroad. He kept England out of the war of Polish Succession and ultimately succeeded by his peace negotiations in ending it. But the incident of 'Jenkin's ear', in which a Captain Jenkin's ear had been chopped off by a Spanish customs official, caused such a furore in the country that Walpole was compelled, much against his will, to declare war on Spain (1739). This conflict in South America involved England in the greater war of Austrian Succession which opened in Europe in 1740 and lasted till 1748. The defeat of the English by the French at Fontenoy (in the Netherlands) in 1745 led directly to the Jacobite rebellion. The war closed with the peace treaty of Aix la Chapelle (1748). Walpole had retired in 1742 and though his successors, the Newcastle Ministry, pursued his pacifist policies, peace was broken by the Seven Years' War (1756-63). The cause was colonial rivalry between England and France in India and America. The aggressors in both India and America were the French. The war went badly for the English in the beginning. Minorca was lost (1756) and Admiral Byng who failed to defend it was shot. It was at this stage that Pitt the elder, or the Great Commoner as he was called, came to the helm of affairs and saved the situation. He was a great statesman, a great orator, and a great war minister. He fought the French in collaboration with Frederick the Great of Prussia. His strategy was to help Frederick with men and money to keep the French occupied in Europe so that they could not put forth all their strength overseas. The war produced two heroes: Clive in India and Wolfe in America. Clive's victory at Plassey (1757) and Wolfe's capture of Quebec in Canada (1759) sealed the fate of the French in both India and America. By the end of the war Carnatak and Bengal had become British provinces and Canada had been conquered and the French driven out of North America. Many other French possessions in West Africa and the West Indies were seized to swell the British gains. The Ministry of Pitt, the man who laid the foundations of this vast British Empire, lasted only four years (1757-1761), for as soon as the national crisis had been averted, he resigned.

George III

When George III succeeded his grandfather in 1760, he found the Whigs in command. He had come to the throne with the ambition of autocratic rule not dissimilar to that of the Stuarts. He found that the secret of the Whigs' power lay in the patronage in church and state which they dispensed among their friends. The first two Georges being foreigners—George I could hardly speak English—and not quite sure of themselves had surrendered the royal patronage to the Whig Oligarchy. George III who had been taught to be a king in reality, not a king in name, took into his own hands the patronage of the state and church and began distributing royal favours himself, thus filling the House of Commons with mercenaries—"the king's friends". Thus the cabinet was again reduced to the status of King's servants, carrying out the royal will. This he was able to accomplish, because in the first place, there was no Tory opposition—the Tories as a party

were almost defunct—and secondly, because he identified himself with the people as ‘farmer George’ and a true Briton. The Tories who had been averse to the first two Georges as German interlopers readily gave their loyalty to the new ‘British’ king. They rallied round him, but it was twenty years after the new king’s accession that a new Tory party came into being under the leadership of the younger Pitt, son of the Great Commoner.

During these twenty years the king ruled as an autocrat, with the result that there was considerable tension and strife between the ruler and the ruled. The internal troubles became so acute that the king was obliged to entrust the government again to the elder Pitt—now Earl of Chatham (1766-69)—this time to save the country from itself. But by this time he was a dying man and had no real voice in the affairs of State. His Ministry ended with a bleak prospect for the country and the Empire. The king had by now achieved his ambition and flattened all his Whig enemies including Chatham whom he called ‘the trumpet of sedition’ just because he had raised his voice against taxing the American colonies.

This triumph of the king was unfortunate for England, for it coincided almost exactly with her dispute with her American colonies. So long as the French held Canada, the American colonists feared them too much to sever their connection with the mother country, irksome as it was. They had a number of grievances, the chief being the restrictions on their trade in the interest of Britain. The fear of the French being removed the colonists began to chafe under the British rule. Just then the British government decided to tax the colonies by way of making them pay for the expenses incurred in the war with the French. This enraged the colonists and the slogan ‘No taxation without representation’ echoed throughout the colonies. British goods were boycotted and a ship with a cargo of tea was boarded and tea-chests were thrown into Boston harbour (1773). This incident known as ‘the Boston Tea Party’ was the signal for war. All sensible opinion in England was against war, but the king was adamant. In Lord North he found a Prime Minister (1770-82) who tamely carried out his foolish policies and plunged England into war with the colonists.

The War of American Independence lasted seven years (1775-1782). The Americans found in George Washington, a farmer of Virginia, an outstanding General and an inspiring leader, who undaunted by early reverses led them to final victory. They were actively helped by France, Spain and Holland; while Russia, Prussia, and the Scandinavian countries combined in the ‘armed neutrality of the North’ against Britain. The thirteen American colonies were lost to Britain and American independence was acknowledged by the Treaty of Versailles (1783).

The end of the American War of Independence also brought about the end of the King’s personal rule and the restoration of parliamentary democracy. Lord North resigned in 1782 to be suc-

ceeded by two short-term Whig Ministries: Rockingham and North-Fox coalition (1782-1783). The Rockingham Ministry made itself memorable by passing Burke's Economic Reform Bill which, though it did not end parliamentary corruption altogether, considerably reduced the government patronage which was responsible for it. On the fall of the Fox-North coalition, the king invited the younger Pitt as the head of the revived Tory party to form the government (1783).

Pitt the Younger

Pitt was Prime Minister for nineteen years, 1783-1801 and 1804-1806. After the American disaster it was he who rescued England from her financial crisis by instituting sound economic reforms. He also effected administrative reforms in the governments of India and Canada. He was a very popular Prime Minister, like his father, but when he attempted to make Parliamentary reform, his own party rejected his proposals. Then came the French Revolution (1789) which caused such a panic in England that all talk of reform was banned as revolutionary. The excesses of the Jacobins—extremist French revolutionists—particularly the September massacres (1792) and the execution of the French King Louis XVI and his Queen, Mary Antoinette—all in the name of liberty—so horrified England that even the Whigs like Fox and the romantics like Wordsworth who were in the beginning sympathetic to the cause of the revolutionaries turned against it. The French Ambassador and his staff were expelled from England. This so exasperated France that she declared war upon England (1793).

This war which lasted, with a brief intermission, for twenty years was a life and death struggle for England; but though Napoleon had the whole of Europe at his feet, he could not seize from Britain the command of the sea. His desperate attempt to invade England failed because of the British fleet's watchfulness. England scored two great naval victories; first in the Battle of the Nile (1798) and second at Trafalgar (southern coast of Spain), 1805. Nelson, the hero of both, was killed in the second in the hour of victory; but he had done his work. He had utterly destroyed the French fleet and swept the French off the sea.

In 1801 took place the union of Ireland with Great Britain to form the United Kingdom. The Irish were not willing, for the promised Catholic Emancipation, a necessary condition, had not been granted. Pitt who was keen on removing the civil disabilities of the Catholics resigned. He, however, came to power again in 1804 and remained Prime Minister until his death in 1806. The Whigs led by Fox formed a coalition Ministry of 'All the Talents' which, though it lasted only a few months, distinguished itself by abolishing the slave trade (1807). The moving spirit in the movement for the abolition of the slave trade had been Wilberforce, but it was the powerful backing of Fox which enabled him to win the day. Fox died soon after Pitt the same

year. The Whig coalition was dismissed, to be followed by a succession of Tory Ministries, the longest of which was that of Lord Liverpool lasting fifteen years (1812-27). The war with Napoleon was pursued with greater energy than had been shown by the Whigs. Though Pitt and Nelson had gone, they were ably succeeded by Castlereagh (Foreign Secretary) and Wellington. With them began the second phase of the war.

Britain was the mistress of the seas, but Napoleon was still supreme on land. He had declared himself Emperor of the French (1804), and installed his relations and marshals as kings in various territories of Europe. His eldest brother Joseph Bonaparte was king of Spain. In 1808 Spain rose against the usurper and the French army of occupation and appealed to the British for help. Castlereagh sent an army under Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington) who drove the French from Spain and Portugal. This is known as the Peninsular war which lasted 1808-13.

Napoleon by his Milan decree (1807) ordered blockade of England, which meant that neutral vessels calling at English ports were liable to seizure. England ordered a counter blockade of Napoleonic Europe. The U.S. resented this interference in their trade and declared war (1812-14). The English were defeated at New Orleans and the war ended with the Treaty of Ghent (Belgium), 1814.

This unpleasant episode was, however, a minor affair in the larger conflict going on in Europe. The European powers humbled by Napoleon and temporarily at peace with him became restive and began re-organising themselves, to overthrow this Corsican adventurer. They tired of his decree forbidding the import of British and British-carried goods to which their peoples had become accustomed and began admitting them. Even his brother Louis, King of Holland, admitted them. So did Bernadetto, one of his own marshals, who was king of Sweden. He turned out Louis and annexed Holland. Sweden joined hands with Russia and Napoleon decided to teach Russia a lesson. In 1812 he assembled a mighty army of half a million and launched it upon Russia. The Russians kept on retreating until the French army reached Moscow. The city was deserted and burnt by the Russians, and there was no enemy in sight for Napoleon to fight with. After a month of futility and frustration, the army began to retreat in mid-October. Tired and starving the soldiers were overtaken by the Russian winter and almost the whole of the Grand Army perished.

Undaunted by the Russian disaster, Napoleon raised new armies to face coalition of all Europe ranged against him. Prussia, so far quiet, was the first to declare war upon Napoleon (March 1813). Soon she was joined by Russia, Sweden, and Austria. Wellington pursuing the French entered France in June. Napoleon fought with the courage of desperation on all fronts and inflicted several defeats on the allies. The odds, however, were overwhelming and the game was up. Paris capitulated, 31 March 1814, and Napoleon abdicated

a few days after. He was exiled to the island of Elba in the Mediterranean.

No sooner was Napoleon gone than the Allies by the Treaty of Paris restored the French monarchy to the Bourbons. The executed King's son Louis XVII having died, his brother came to the throne as Louis XVIII. Encouraged by France's disapproval of Bourbon restoration, as also by the squabbles among the allied powers among themselves at the Congress of Vienna which had opened in November 1814, Napoleon escaped from Elba, landed in France (1 March 1815) took command of the French armies and marched upon Paris. Poor Louis fled to Belgium and Napoleon declared himself Emperor (30 March). He hurriedly reconstituted his army in two months to forestall the conjunction of the allies. As Russia and Austria were too far away, he thought, he would make short work of the British and German forces first and then deal with Russia and Austria. The issue was decided in just four days (15-18 June) and in Belgium. The English under Wellington and the Prussians under Blucher defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. Napoleon's brief glory of ten years was over. He was, this time, sent to the far-off island of St. Helena in South Atlantic where he lived as a captive until his death in 1821. At the Congress of Vienna the victors restored, as far as possible, the boundaries of Europe, as they had existed before the Napoleonic storm.

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars of England were the greatest she had fought so far and were a heavy drain upon her resources. She had to spend not only on a greater army and navy than ever before, but had to support her allies Russia, Austria and Prussia with enormous sums of money. But she was amply compensated, for she emerged from the conflict not only as a victor but as the undisputed mistress of the seas. She became immensely rich from her world-wide commerce, which led Napoleon to describe the English contemptuously as 'a nation of shopkeepers'.

Society

The society that gave the eighteenth century England her tone and character was aristocratic. Political power was concentrated in the nobility, whether Whig or Tory, because of their vested interests in the unreal or rotten boroughs. Bribing the voters was an accepted thing at the elections. Though cash was the usual bait, other allurements were not ruled out. The beautiful Duchess of Devonshire had to submit to a working man's kiss to get a vote for Fox. Corporate bodies like municipalities and universities were equally corrupt. Gibbon in his autobiography records that the professors at the University of Oxford had absolved their consciences of all duty of teaching. Commissions in the army were bought and sold.

The aristocracy did themselves well both materially and intellectually. They rounded off their education by a Grand Tour of Europe where they mixed with the highest circles of foreign society and

returned loaded with art-treasures with which they embellished their magnificent houses. They gambled, drank deep, and in general enjoyed life to the hilt. Their excellence consisted in outward form—elegance of dress and manners—rather than in morals. Their attitude to religion and virtue was one of amused cynicism. Their highest ideal was commonsense and rational behaviour. In a word, their culture was artificial.

Literature and art were considerably influenced by France and Italy. This might seem strange, if not paradoxical, considering that England was fighting France throughout the century. The English despised the French religion, which was and is Catholic, and the French political system which was feudal. But perhaps it is not so strange after all. We witness the same phenomenon in India today where inspite of political hostility to the British, English language and literature are more popular than ever before. The arts, it would seem, have no geographical boundaries; they are international. However that may be, French influence on English literature was both good and bad. It was good in prose, bad in poetry. The Eighteenth Century is pre-eminently the age of prose in England in that prose took immense strides in developing clarity of thought and precision and elegance of expression, much of these due certainly to French literature which excels in these qualities. French influence was bad in poetry because French scepticism and rationalism were dampers to the imagination on which poetry is nourished. The influence of Italy so dominant in Elizabethan times was in this age confined to opera and music.

Because of general political stability following the Revolution, the eighteenth century in England was an era of peace and prosperity. Englishmen having won their liberties after a long struggle settled down to the business of peaceful and civilized living. Political and religious factions did not disappear, but they fought out their battles with pen rather than with sword. The sword, in fact, ceased, in the course of the century, to be a part of a gentleman's outfit, and the number of stabbings and murders diminished considerably. Duels with pistols, however, continued well on into the nineteenth century. London's streets were still unsafe in the reign of Queen Anne, but rioting, way-laying, robbing and other forms of barbarism declined as the century advanced. With the spread of education life became more ordered and peaceful. Clubs and Coffee houses increased vastly in number and became centres of social life which was enlivened with literary and political discussions. The privileged class in this century attained a very high level in education and culture, not through the lazy universities but by their own efforts. It was the nobility rather than the crown that now patronised art and letters. The high standard of general culture is evidenced by such eminent personalities as Dr. Johnson, Burke, Sheridan, Pitt, Fox and a score of others. Great literary figures like Addison and Steele, Johnson, and Goldsmith set themselves the task of educating and civilising the general public by means of their periodicals and

magazines. They were helped in that task by the peculiar religious and rationalist tendencies of the age. On the one hand, the religious revival known as Methodism started by the brothers John and Charles Wesley attempted to purify and strengthen evangelical Christianity; on the other, the scientific spirit stimulated by the Royal Society and the materialistic philosophy of Locke led to free thinking and rationalism. The rationalists professed a kind of natural or commonsense religion called Deism, which accepted God but rejected revelation and the mysterious and spiritual elements of Christianity. The Deistic controversy occupied most of the learned men of the day and Deistic rationalism which dominated the church as well as other spheres of life for well over a century was ended only by the Oxford movement of the nineteenth century. But the rule of reason and commonsense had done its work of enlightening and humanising the eighteenth century. Nothing demonstrates the civilising influence of this century so much as the agitation against the slave-trade which was ultimately abolished early in the next century.

Class distinctions though sharply marked were not rigid and there was no class hatred. The poor were content with their humble status. But this state of affairs did not continue after the advent of the industrial revolution in the later years of George III. The substitution of machinery for hand-labour enriched manufacturers and merchants, but caused great suffering among the poor. Unemployment, low wages, unhygienic conditions in factories, female and child labour—all called for reform and adjustment. But reform being blocked by the panic of the French Revolution, the poor were helpless. Their mute distress, however, did not conceal their resentment and hatred of their masters. As soon as the Napoleonic wars ended, their smouldering discontent blew up in violent agitation and strife, which led to long-postponed economic and political reforms, ushering in a new and juster social structure in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 23

QUEEN ANNE PROSE

General character of Queen Anne Prose—Defoe: his journalism, his fiction his historical importance—Swift: his satires, *Journal to Stella*, *Gulliver's Travels*—Steele and Addison—The *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, their historical importance—Other prose writers, Arbuthnot among them having the greatest literary interest.

Though the whole of the 18th century is called the Age of Prose, its beginning, that is to say, the Age of Queen Anne, is specially notable for its prose writing. It saw the establishment of the periodical *Essay* by Addison and Steele, and the beginnings of prose fiction, if not of the novel proper, in the works of Defoe and Swift. Another remarkable feature of this era of prose is the predominance of political satire, which reached a glorious height in Swift and Arbuthnot. And implied in all these forms was a further development of the plain style begun during the Restoration period—a style which could be used for all purposes prose is meant to subserve—narration, description, exposition, speculation, argument.

Daniel Defoe (1659-1731), the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, is the first conspicuous example of a writer graduating from journalism to literature. The son of a dissenting butcher of London, Defoe received in Dissenting Schools a good modern and practical education which was different from the classical discipline imparted in the universities. After travelling widely on the continent, he tried several trades but had no luck. As he had a special bent for controversy, he took to pamphleteering and controversial writing. His first popular work was *The True-Born Englishman* (1701), a verse satire in which he attacked those who opposed King William III on the ground that he was Dutch and not English. Here is a famous couplet which describes the English as 'A race uncertain and uneven, Derived from all the nations under heaven.' He was no poet but he could argue in verse or prose with force and facility. His second important work was *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702). In this Defoe, himself a Dissenter, very gravely argued that the shortest way with the Dissenters would be to liquidate them. The subtlety of his irony was beyond his readers who took him literally at first. Then they realised that he had fooled both Dissenters and their enemies, the Tories. He

was tried for sedition, fined, imprisoned, and pilloried. Not in the least disconcerted he wrote, while still in prison, *A Hymn to the Pillory*. His unjust imprisonment made him a people's hero. After a few months he was liberated by Harley (Lord Oxford) and took to journalism. He started *The Review* (1704-13), a periodical which was at first weekly, then bi-weekly, and finally tri-weekly, written practically all by himself. It was a non-party paper in which he expressed his views on current politics besides writing essays on all sorts of subjects. Newspapers had appeared during the Civil War period, and in the later 17th century writers like Sir Roger L'Estrange with his *Observer*, and John Dunton, the bookseller, with his *Athenian Gazette*, were brisk and popular journalists. While they have the credit due to pioneers, it was Defoe who widened the scope of journalism with his *Review*. In 1706 appeared his *True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal*, an astonishingly realistic report of a ghost story current at the time.

Impressed by his abilities, Harley employed Defoe as his secret agent in which capacity he travelled all over England and specially in Scotland where he negotiated the Union. For writing some ironical and anti-Jacobite pamphlets (1712-13) he was arrested again but was bailed out. Though the Tory government had fallen and Harley was out, Defoe continued as an agent of the Whig government, ostensibly acting as a Tory journalist, which enabled him to spy on the Tories as also to tone down the harshness of their opposition.

He turned to fiction when he was nearly sixty, and his world-famous *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719. This was followed in the next five years by about a dozen other works of fiction, the most important being *Captain Singleton*, *Moll Flanders*, *A Journal of the Plague Year*, *Colonel Jack*, *Roxana* and the *Memoirs of a Cavalier*. During the last six years of his life his restless pen produced a number of miscellaneous works on travel, trade, commerce and other subjects. In addition to the works mentioned above he wrote numerous pamphlets on all sorts of subjects. He was such a prolific writer that to list all his works would require several pages. For energy, industry, fertility of invention, and versatility, Defoe has no equal in the 18th century.

Defoe's fame rests principally on his fiction. These are stories of adventure and of low life. Captain Singleton is a pirate, Colonel Jack a thief, the Cavalier of the *Memoirs* a soldier of fortune of the Civil War period, Moll Flanders and Roxana are prostitutes. *The Journal of the Plague Year* is a deceptive title for a work of historical fiction which purports to give an eye-witness account of the great plague of 1664-65. Considering that Defoe was only five years old in the plague year, the *Journal* is a marvel of life-like fiction. The adventures of the immortal Crusoe on his desert island are the common possession of us all and need no comment.

Defoe's technique in all these works is uniformly the same. The adventures are narrated by the fictitious hero or heroine in the first

person with such vividness and circumstantial detail that the total effect is one of perfect illusion of truth. Defoe is careful to avoid anything approaching the fantastic or improbable, thus, making the narrative absolutely convincing. There is no attempt at fine writing; the language as well as the style is plain, straightforward, and without any frills. The highbrows accused him of low taste, but there is nothing in his stories of pirates, pickpockets, or prostitutes that encourages sin or vice. The wicked—one and all—repent at the end. True to his age and Puritan faith the entire tendency of his fiction, as of other writings, is moral and didactic. Apart from the doubtful role he played as a spy, he was not only a man of honour and a fearless fighter for freedom of conscience, but a liberal and morally wholesome writer.

Defoe's genius has not received the recognition due to it. Great as is his intrinsic worth, his historical importance is even greater. His *Review* suggested to Steele the essays of the *Tatler*, his *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* gave hints to Swift for his *Modest Proposal*, and his fiction prepared the way which led to the founding of the novel by Richardson and Fielding. The superlative praises that critics have heaped on Swift are better deserved by Defoe.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), the author of *Gulliver's Travels*, though of English parents was born in Ireland a few months after his father's death. Supported by his uncle, he went to Trinity College, Dublin, and obtained his degree by 'special grace'. He would have preferred Oxford or Cambridge, and typical of his temper and character is the remark that his uncle had given him 'the education of a dog'. Finding no employment he became secretary to Sir William Temple, a distant cousin. His position of dependence soon became intolerable and he returned to Ireland, was ordained a minister and got a small living. Bored with this dull and poor job, he again went to Temple and remained with him till the latter's death in 1699. In 1697 he wrote *The Battle of the Books* in defence of Temple who had joined in the foolish Moderns Vs Ancients controversy in favour of the Ancients. This together with the more famous *A Tale of a Tub* was published anonymously in 1704 (nearly all his works were published anonymously).

After Temple's death Swift returned to Ireland and obtained a living, this time a more decent one. He remained there from 1699 to 1710 paying frequent visits to London where he made the acquaintance of Addison, Steele, Congreve, and other Whigs. The Whigs found in him a powerful literary ally and he wrote a series of pamphlets in support of the Church and the Whigs, the most important of which is his ironical *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*. During the same period he wrote in Steele's *Tatler* attacking in one of his essays the vulgarism of style that was invading the newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets, in the name of plain writing. In a mirthful mood he attacked Partridge, the astrologer, in a series of

squibs predicting his death on a certain date, followed by an account of his death and funeral etc., in spite of the poor man's protests.

Neither his advocacy of the cause of the Church nor his support of the Whigs brought him any reward. Disgusted and disappointed he crossed over to the Tories and began writing for them and against the Whigs in the *Examiner*, a Tory paper whose editor he became. He produced powerful pamphlets in support of the Tories including *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711) which pleaded peace with France and ending the War of the Spanish succession. Along with Pope, Gay, Arbuthnot, and other friends he founded the Scriblerus Club (1714) to satirise pedantry. These co-operative satires were published with Pope's works (1741) and were mainly the work of Arbuthnot. His *Journal to Stella* (1710-13) was written in this period of high spirits and is the only work of literary interest in this period. For his services to the Tories he was rewarded with the Deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. He had expected a Bishopric and was terribly disappointed. He returned to Ireland, a frustrated and bitter man. The fall of the Tories on the death of Queen Anne and the Hanoverian succession dashed all his hopes of preferment. For the last 30 years of his life (1714-45) he lived an exile in Ireland, a country which he hated, and made only occasional visits to his friends in London, the last being in 1727. Forced to live there, however, he was moved by the distress of the Irish people and pleaded their cause in a large number of pamphlets including *Drapier's Letters* (1724), *A Short View of the Present State of Ireland* (1728) and *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burden on their Parents or Country* (1729). His *Gulliver's Travels* was published in 1726. His *Polite Conversation* was published in 1738 and *Directions to Servants*, written earlier, was published after his death. His last five or six years were passed in great suffering caused by a brain disease, and for a time towards the end he was insane. Ironically enough he left a part of his income to found a lunatic asylum.

Swift is a phenomenon, an enigma, in English literature. In sheer intellectual power, in the perfect simplicity of his prose, he has few rivals and no superior. He had warm friendships, was adored by two respectable women whose affection he reciprocated. He was for a time a great figure in politics, hobnobbed with ministers and was sought after by lords and ladies. And yet his writings are the outpourings of a diseased mind. They are so saturated with misanthropy, pessimism, and general morbidity of outlook, that it is difficult to believe that their author was completely sane. The ferocity of his satires makes it very doubtful if he had any fine feelings or was always in control of himself. It is not surprising that he died insane. The seeds of insanity seem to have been in his system all the time. No man, certainly no cultured man, in his right mind could write like this—

Mr. Secretary told me the Duke of Buckingham had been talking much about

me and desired my acquaintance. I answered it could not be, for he had not yet made sufficient advances; then Shrewsbury said he thought the Duke was not used to make advances. I said I could not help that for I always expected advances in proportion to men's quality, and more from a Duke than any other man.

(*Journal to Stella*)

In a letter to Duchess of Queensberry he says:

I am glad you know your duty; for it has been known and established rule above twenty years in England that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspire to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality the greater were their advances.

Such insufferable arrogance and snobbery in a man who ridiculed the pride and pretension, pomp and pageantry, of human beings is hardly compatible with mental balance. It is a very feeble defence that he was soured and embittered by disappointments and frustrations. Fortune is a whirlgig and only fools are embittered by disappointments and failures. And Swift was no fool. Congenital mental deformity must have been the chief cause of his aberrations.

Swift was an extraordinarily prolific writer, second in this respect only to Defoe. Most of his political and religious works have little interest today and need not be noticed here. Of the others, which have more literary importance, the following may be read in careful selections, for Swift is not wholesome reading.

A Tale of a Tub. The whimsical title is explained by the sailors' practice (according to Swift) of throwing out an empty tub to a whale to occupy its attention and divert it from attacking the ship. The book is a tub thrown to divert the attention of the critics like Hobbes from further attacks on the Church. An old man leaves the legacy of a coat to each of his three sons, Peter, Martin, and Jack, with strict instructions not to make any alterations in it. The coat is Christianity, Peter (Roman Catholicism), Martin (from Martin Luther) Anglicanism, and Jack (Puritanism). The sons disobey by adapting the coat to the fashions of the day. Though the satire was intended principally against Catholicism and Dissent, the Anglican Church to which Swift himself belonged is not spared. Besides this attack on all religion, there are digressions ridiculing all learning, science, and philosophy. Swift took his stand on reason and commonsense rejecting all abstract or transcendental ideas. God is a transcendental being and Anglicanism can no more stand the test of reason and commonsense than Catholicism or Calvinism. It was this dilemma which led to the Deism of the 18th century.

Journal to Stella. Swift had met Stella (Esther Johnson) who, like him, was a poor relation in the Temple household. She fell in love with him and to be near him followed him to Ireland. Their exact relationship is uncertain; what is certain is that Swift reciprocated her love. Another lady, whose pet name was Vanessa, also adored him and pursued him to Ireland. This complication was resolved by her death in 1723. Stella died in 1728.

The *Journal* consists of letters giving a day-to-day account of his life during 1710-13 when he was at the peak of his power and influence in London. Quite apart from its interest as a commentary on characters and events, the journal reveals the human and tender side of Swift's character which otherwise is so hard and unsympathetic. There is, however, too much baby-talk in the letters, which is apt to be boring.

Drapier's Letters. Wood, an Englishman, had been granted patent at a great profit to himself to coin Irish half-pences. As this would have debased Irish currency, the Irish protest was voiced by Swift in a series of four letters, which forced the Government to drop the project. Swift became a popular Irish hero.

A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Becoming a Burden on their Parents or Country. Taking a hint from Defoe's *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, Swift proposed with an air of sober gravity that poor people's children from twelve to eighteen months old should be used as food for the rich. The irony is devastating but the whole thing is too disgusting to read.

Gulliver's Travels. This, Swift's most famous work, is a satire on man and his institutions in the form of a tale of travels. In the first part Gulliver, a ship's surgeon, is shipwrecked on the island of Lilliput, whose inhabitants are dwarfs about six inches high. Everything else on the island is on the same diminutive scale. Because of their little size, their pomp and pageantry, civil strife and wars with their neighbours, look ridiculous. The political and religious dissensions of England in Swift's time are satirised in the quarrels of Lilliputians between the wearers of high heels and low heels and between the Big-endians and Little-endians on the earth-shaking question whether eggs should be broken on their big or little end.

In the second part Gulliver finds himself in Brobdingnag, whose inhabitants are of giant size and everything else is on that scale. When Gulliver tells of his own people, their king says, 'By what I have gathered from your own relation...I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'

The third part relates Gulliver's visit to the flying island of Laputa and the neighbouring continent and its capital Lagado. The targets of satire are philosophers, historians, scientists, and projectors. In the Academy of projectors at Lagado one professor has been working eight years trying to extract sunshine from cucumbers.

Swift's bitterness and misanthropy rise to a climax in the fourth part which describes the country of Houyhnhnms, who are horses endowed with reason. The virtues of these superior beings are contrasted with the bestial vices of Yahoos, the most disgustingly depraved specimens of humanity. In its hysterical abuse of humanity the satire defeats itself.

By a strange quirk of fate *Gulliver's Travels* has become a classic for children who can neither understand nor care for its satire. Like *Robinson Crusoe* its chief merit is that it is an absorbing story of adventure. The former has wider appeal, because it is closer to life; the latter has the interest of the fantastic.

Polite Conversation. This is a good-humoured satire on the faults and follies of conversation Swift had observed in fashionable people.

Addison said that Swift was 'the greatest genius of the nation.' Addison was no great critic and his verdict may have been dictated by the partiality of a friend. Saintsbury who is usually very guarded and economical in his praise has, however, praised Swift's genius in superlative terms. There is no doubt that Swift had one of the most original and powerful minds of his age and that he expressed himself in a style which is simple, trenchant, and forceful. But it is a pity that he employed his great abilities only to denounce humanity. The end of satire is to correct, but Swift was not concerned to correct; he derived artistic (and malicious) delight from ingenious irony and unmeasured abuse. The world may admire the genius of the gloomy Dean but cannot love him.

In marked contrast to Swift were the essayists Steele and Addison who, though not technically satirists, had a satirical vein which was genial, good-humoured, and therefore more effective. By their joint labours in *Tatler* and the *Spectator* they accomplished more in the way of social, cultural, and literary reform than all other preachers and prophets of the 18th century put together.

Richard Steele (1672-1719) described himself as an 'Englishman born in Ireland.' He was educated at the Charterhouse school London, and at Oxford with Addison as a fellow student at both. He left the University without a degree and joined the army. He showed staunch Whiggism in a poem on the death of Queen Mary and was promoted captain. He was half rake and half puritan combining the licence of the Restoration cavalier with the restraint of the Augustans.

He was a reckless spendthrift, and like Goldsmith and Sheridan was always in debt. He was quite conscious of his weaknesses and showed his reforming zeal in his first work the *Christian Hero* (1701) a tract trying to prove that 'no principles except those of religion are sufficient to make a great man.' He married twice, his second wife dying in 1718. He was appointed gentleman waiter to Prince George of Denmark, husband of Queen Anne, and Gazeteer or editor of the *London Gazette*. It was in this capacity that the scheme of the *Tatler* (1709-11) occurred to him. This was followed by the *Spectator* (1711-12), the *Guardian*, the *Englishman* and several other short-lived papers. In 1713 he was elected a member of Parliament, but was almost immediately expelled for writing a pamphlet *The Crisis* which favoured the Hanoverian succession. This led to his writing an *Apology for Himself and His Writings* which is a source of many biographical details. His expulsion, however, was

short-lived. With the accession of George I and the return of the Whigs to power Steele's fortunes rose again. In 1715 he again entered Parliament and was knighted. He became manager of the Drury Lane Theatre and got a lucrative government post. Political differences estranged him from Addison in 1718. His journalistic ventures continued until his leaving London about 1724 because of his financial difficulties. In addition to the works mentioned above Steele wrote a number of comedies whose importance is more historical than intrinsic.

Joseph Addison (1672-1719), the son of a clergyman, was educated with Steele at Charterhouse and Oxford. He distinguished himself as a classical scholar and became a fellow of Magdalen College. He won official favour by writing a poem on William III and flattering dedications to ministers. He was rewarded with an annual pension of £300 to enable him to travel and prepare himself for public affairs. His 'grand tour' of the continent lasted four years (1699-1703), though his pension was stopped on the death of the king. He allied himself with Whigs and supported them in pamphlets and in the party paper *The Whig Examiner*. He wrote *The Campaign* (1704) on the victory of Blenheim and was rewarded with high offices in the government and a membership of Parliament. His other works of this period, *Remarks on Italy* and *Dialogues on Medals*, are unimportant. During the Tory administration (1710-14) he lost office and occupied himself with literary labours, collaborating with Steele in the *Tatler*, the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, etc. and writing a tragedy *Cato* (1713), which, though lifeless now, was a great success at the time because of political excitement. When the Whigs returned to power on the death of Queen Anne, Addison again busied himself in politics, defending the Whigs in the *Freeholder*. In 1716 he married the Countess of Warwick by whom he had a daughter. He occupied several high government posts, becoming Secretary of State towards the end of his life.

The *Tatler* and the *Spectator*

Journalism had grown considerably during the last decade of the 17th Century, and there was a plentiful supply of newspapers in the reign of Queen Anne—the *Postman*, the *Post-Boy*, the *Daily Courant*, the *Supplement*, the *English Post*, and others. They gave political news, purveyed social gossip, and discussed current topics. Defoe's *Review* added political comments. The *Tatler*, however, was different from all these. Though at the start it was a medley like the other news-sheets, soon the news gave place to social criticism. Steele's aim was moral and educational, to instruct the public 'what to think.' He 'also resolved to have something which may be of entertainment to the fair sex, in honour of whom I have taken the title of this paper.' The genial humour of this dedication struck the key note of the paper.

The *Tatler* the first issue of which appeared on 12th April 1709 was a tri-weekly paper purporting to be edited by an imaginary old

bachelor, Isaac Bickerstaff, the name which had been used by Swift to mystify the astrologer Partridge. A few of the essays were contributed by Swift who was at the time on friendly terms with Steele. A far more substantial contributor was Addison. The range of subjects was wide as of the *Spectator*, but their treatment was lighter and less formal and elaborate. The earlier numbers contained three or four essays, but in the end the paper contained, like the *Spectator*, only one essay. Thus the *Spectator* is decidedly superior in literary merit, but the *Tatler* is more lively and varied. As a moralist Steele preached specially against gambling and duelling. His chivalrous regard for women, however, is the most attractive feature of his preaching. He was emotional and sentimental and his scenes of domestic happiness are among the most beautiful of their kind in English literature. The essay in which he describes the grief-stricken family after the death of his father, when he was yet a child, is a masterpiece of pathos. The nonchalant ease of his style makes Steele still more engaging.

The *Tatler* lasted less than two years and came to an abrupt end in January 1711. Within two months Steele launched the *Spectator* (March 1711-December 1712) in collaboration with Addison. It appeared daily and had only one essay on a set subject. It was designed as a continuation of the *Tatler*. The framework of the club representing different social types was maintained; the Trumpet Club of the *Tatler* being replaced by the *Spectator's* Club. The moral and educational purpose of the paper was made more explicit by Addison, who declared that it was his ambition to bring 'philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee houses.'

How effectively this purpose was carried out is shown by the tremendous popularity and influence of the *Spectator* essays throughout the 18th century. While Addison was Steele's assistant in the *Tatler*, he was the senior partner in the *Spectator* which is now habitually associated with his name. He had imbibed the principles of classicism in a truer and more practical sense than the other Augustans and applied them in his social criticism. While Pope and Swift under the mask of satire abused and antagonised their fellowmen by calling them dunces and yahoos, Addison with his greater knowledge of life won them over to good sense and virtue by the moderation and restraint of his pen. By his humane wit, gentle irony, and kindly humour he was able to secure the people's willing acceptance of his code of civilised social behaviour and his criteria of good taste in art and literature.

The social evils which he started out to combat were the artificiality and the foppery which still lingered in the Post-Restoration period and the violence of political and religious strife. He showed the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of vice, and sought to reconcile the extremes in religion and politics by preaching the virtues of moderation and toleration. He showed that religion is not fanaticism, that moderate enjoyment of the good things of life was not incompatible

with piety, that Whigs and Tories could live in friendship while still holding their different views. Though a staunch Whig himself, he portrayed in Sir Roger de Coverley an old-fashioned Tory squire who despite his simple-minded eccentricities, prejudices, and superstitions, is one of the most lovable characters of fiction. We laugh at him but we also love and respect him.

The range of the *Spectator* was very wide and covered everything from fashions in dress to such advanced subjects as the appreciation of Milton and Aristotle's rules for an epic, Wit, Laughter, and Pleasures of the Imagination. Though his literary criticisms were not very original (for he was simply retailing Aristotle's rules filtered through French critics, specially Boileau), they were good enough for his time and served to stimulate his readers' interest in their own literature.

Of the total of 555 papers of the *Spectator* over 500 were written by Addison and Steele—Addison's output being a little more than half. The rest were contributed by Pope, Berkeley, and others. Addison is more scholarly and polished, but Steele with his carelessly easy style is more charming. Steele was the pioneering and inventive genius, the originator of all the bright features which were developed and perfected by Addison. Sir Roger de Coverly, for example, was first sketched by him, but was developed by Addison into his masterpiece. It was he who invented the Spectator's Club and from his pen came the pictures of Sir Andrew Freeport, a Whig merchant of London; Will Honeycomb, a delightful fop, and Captain Sentry, a veteran of the army. To him also belongs the credit for some of the most delightful papers of the *Spectator*, containing stories and episodes, like the pathetic tale of Inkle and Yarico, the amusing stage-coach journey with the Quaker, and the account of Sir Roger's hopeless passion for the widow. Though his humour is broader and more kindly than Addison's, he is less self-controlled and can sometimes lash out vigorously, as in his plain-spoken attack on the indecency of the stage (*Spectator*, No. 51).

The *Tatler* papers were collected and published in several volumes as *The Lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.* The collected edition of the *Spectator* continued to appear successively throughout the 18th century. The *Spectator*, identified in the public mind with the greater name of Addison, had a marked influence not only on English manners and morals but also on English prose style which has in the main followed the model set by Mr. Spectator. His style strikes a nice balance between journalistic ease and artistic elegance. Dr. Johnson's praise of Addison's style is as famous as it is well-deserved. He described it 'as the model of the middle style' and added that 'whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.'

Great as is the intrinsic value of Steele and Addison in the realm of English prose, their historical importance is even greater. They

were not only the great educators of the 18th century; they established the Essay as an important branch of modern English literature, placed the literary magazine on a firm footing, and by their character-sketches such as that of Roger de Coverly foreshadowed the Novel.

Other Prose Writers

Besides the three great writers discussed above there were in this period about half a dozen others who used the plain style to expound their political, philosophical or theological doctrines. Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, the friend and patron of Pope, was principally a politician who anticipated Disraeli in his democratic Toryism. Shaftesbury (grandson of Dryden's 'Achitophel') is remembered by his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* in which he expounded a system of moral philosophy based on his optimistic view that man is good by nature. In opposition to this Mandeville wrote *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Public Benefits* to prove that man is vicious by nature and that civilisation is founded and sustained by vices. Bishop Butler wrote his *Analogy of Religion* to refute Deism. Bishop Berkeley refuted Locke's materialism by his idealistic metaphysics, denying matter altogether. His prose is remarkable for lucidity and elegance.

Of greater literary interest than all these, however, is John Arbuthnot, the Scottish physician to Queen Anne. Besides being a famous physician, he was a great scholar and a wit. He was a staunch Tory and was the friend of Pope, Swift, Prior, Gay, and other mostly keen Tory wits. He is remembered by his *History of John Bull* (1712) and *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. The *History of John Bull* is a good-humoured satire on the Whigs who wanted to continue the War of the Spanish Succession when the Tories were most anxious to end it. The satire is in the form of an allegory in which the war is depicted as a lawsuit between John Bull (England) and Nicolas Frog (the Dutch) on one side against Lewis Baboon (Louis XIV, the French King) on the other. Its trial is entrusted to Hocus (Marlborough). Most interesting complications arise and the satire is very amusing in its allusions. Altogether it is one of the most delightful political satires that this age produced. It is also the origin of John Bull, the typical Englishman. The *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*, published with Pope's works, were written principally by Arbuthnot in concert with Swift and possibly Pope and other members of the Scriblerus Club. They are a satire on pedantry, the most amusing part being the caricature of fantastic theories of education, some of which are not unknown today. For example, in order to instruct his son in the science of geography, Scriblerus gives him a geographical outfit whose various items—hat, shirt, lace, gloves, shoes, etc.—are drawn from all parts of the globe.

CHAPTER 24

THE AGE OF POPE: POETRY

As has been said before, the 18th century in English literature is a continuation of the Augustan or Classical Age inaugurated during the Restoration period. In poetry Pope followed in the footsteps of Dryden and carried out the classical ideal to its highest perfection. He sums up the 18th century as Dryden summed up the preceding period, with this difference that while Dryden excelled in all the three branches of poetry, prose, and drama, Pope's excellence was confined to poetry. Even so his domination in poetry was so great that the 18th century may not inappropriately be called the century of Pope. Dr. Johnson who dominated the world of letters in the later half of the century simply elaborated, expounded, and consolidated the classical tradition of Pope.

These statements, though valid in the main, are subject to important reservations. Great as Pope's influence was, there had been right from the beginning signs of unconscious revolt from his classical ideal. This revolt is exemplified in such poets as Lady Winchelsea, Thomson, Young and Parnell—all contemporaries of Pope. They show not only a return to Nature and emotion, but some of them, like Thomson and Young, break away from the couplet in favour of blank verse. Still later, after Pope's death, while the imitation of his poetry was the norm throughout the rest of the century, the revolt against him, though perhaps still unconscious, became more pronounced in poets like Collins and Gray, Crabbe and Cowper, Burns and Blake. The lyric note in these is unmistakable and stanza forms take the place of the Popean couplet. Romance was on the way, and these poets became the precursors or heralds of the Romantic Movement of the nineteenth century.

Pope (1688-1744)

Alexander Pope, son of a linen-draper was born in London, but passed his childhood at Binfield in Windsor Forest. Being a Catholic he was denied the benefits of public school and university education. He was physically weak and deformed, and such desultory education as he received as a boy was from the family priest and one or two Catholic schools. But he continued his studies independently.

and was for the most part self-educated. Not all the faults of his character can be attributed to his diseased body or deformity. He was vain, peevish, jealous, mean, and unreliable. Nor were these faults redeemed by conspicuous virtues. He satirised his friend Addison without any real provocation in the 'Character of Atticus', and mercilessly flayed his literary enemies, real as well as fancied in the *Dunciad*. He made love to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the famous blue-stocking of the age, and being snubbed heaped insults upon her in a vulgar satire. He was not very generous in entertaining friends and used to scribble his verses on backs of letters and odd scraps of paper, a species of economy for which Swift called him 'the paper-saving Pope'. Yet, it would be only fair to add that he was a good friend to the younger and promising poets, was genuinely attached to Martha Blount, and was a very good son, having tended his mother in her declining years with real filial care and affection. His translation of Homer brought him about £10,000, a great sum for the times, which together with his paternal property made him rich and independent for the rest of his life. He bought a villa at Twickenham on the Thames, where he laid out an artificial garden which was imitated by many great men of the time. Here he died in 1744.

(*Works*. Apart from minor things, Pope's works may be considered in two groups: earlier and later. The earlier group consists of his 'Pastorals', 'Windsor Forest', 'Messiah', *Essay on Criticism*, the *Rape of the Lock*, 'Eloisa to Abelard', 'Elegy to an Unfortunate Lady', and his translations of Homer; the later of the *Dunciad* and the *Satires* and *Epistles*.

Earlier Group. As Pope was given to lying in such matters, it is difficult to say with certainty when his earliest works were composed. His 'Pastorals' were published in 1709, but he claimed that they were written when he was only sixteen years old. He asserts with his usual vanity that he was a born versifier—

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.

(*Epistle to Arbuthnot*)

However that may be, his earliest work showed that he was an accomplished couplet-writer and a master of fine expression.

The Essay on Criticism, Pope's first major literary venture, was published in 1711. In the main it sums up the art of poetry according to Horace filtered through the French poet-critic Boileau (1636-1711). It could well have been written in prose, for of poetry as such it has little. Nevertheless, Pope's mastery of terse expression has made it a storehouse of pithy maxims some of which have passed into popular speech. Lines like—

A little learning is a dangerous thing.
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.
To err is human, to forgive divine.

—are quoted daily even by those who have never heard the name of Pope.

The Rape of the Lock published in 1714 in its complete form is a mock-heroic poem which satirises the fashionable society of the 18th century. One Lord Petre clipped off a lock of hair from the head of a beautiful maid of honour named Arabella Fermor. This was resented by the lady and led to a serious quarrel between the families. Around this trivial incident Pope wove an elaborate story cast in the epic form. Instead of gods and goddesses of the epic he introduces sylphs, gnomes, and other elemental spirits akin to those of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fashions and foibles of polite society—its toilette, card parties, teas, coffees, fans, snuffs, billet-doux, lap-dogs and other trifling—are satirised with a most delicate and lively fancy. Pope's was an imitative genius. He is said to have borrowed the idea from Boileau's *Lutrin*, but whether borrowed or not, his execution of it is as original as anything to be found in English literature. Dr Johnson described it as "the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful of all Pope's compositions". To this one can only add that as a burlesque it is the most perfect thing of its kind in the English language. A few lines are given below, but the poem should be read as a whole to get the full flavour.

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind,
Nourished two locks, which graceful hung behind
In equal curls, and well conspired to deck
With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck.
Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
And mighty hearts are held in slender chains.

(Canto II, 167-72)

Here thou, great Anna! Whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea.

(Canto III, 297-98)

Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day,
The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,
And wretches hang that jury-men may dine.

(Canto III, 309-12)

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill!

(Canto III, 415-16)

Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes,
And screams of horror rend the affrighted skies.
Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap-dogs breathe their last.

(Canto III, 445-48)

Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll,
Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul.

(Canto V, 675-76)

Eloisa to Abelard and *Elegy to an Unfortunate Lady*. These two short poems are interesting in that they are the only poems in which Pope essayed the subject of love. They cannot be said to be unsuccessful as expressions of passion and pathos.

Eloisa (or Heloise) and Abelard, a famous theological lecturer of Paris (12th century), were lovers; who on being tragically separated carried on correspondence that has become famous. The interest of the poem lies in the conflict in the heart of Eloisa, who has renounced the world for the service of God and yet loves a man.

The unfortunate lady of the *Elegy* had committed suicide because of hopeless love. The following lines, though rhetorical, are not without the eloquence of grief :

By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed,
By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
By foreign hands thy humble grave adorned,
By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned.

Translations of Homer. Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was completed in ten years and published in 1720. It was followed in 1725-26 by the *Odyssey*, a good deal of which was translated by two assistants, Fenton and Broome. The interesting point about the *Odyssey* translation is that nobody to this day can distinguish between Pope's style and that of his co-adjutors. The fact that it could be imitated by any clever versifier shows how mechanical Pope's couplet is. But too much should not be made of this. It may limit Pope's greatness, but not his substantive merit. The more serious fault lies in the quality of the translation. Pope had only a smattering of the classics, and Greek scholars like Bentley and others pointed out that Pope's translations were not Homer. But people in general were pleased since Pope had given them Homer in the language and style of the 18th century. We who know our Homer through better translations can only say that Pope gives the story faithfully enough but minus its grand primitive simplicity. Pope had only one dress to clothe all subjects—the highly artificial dress of the mechanised couplet and sophisticated wit.

Later Group. The *Dunciad*, on the analogy of the *Iliad* which first appeared in 1728 and was later enlarged (1742), is a violent satire on major as well as minor writers of the day who, Pope thought, had either slighted him or had not shown adequate appreciation of his genius. It was a war of wit against dullness. Pope had brought out an edition of Shakespeare in 1725. Its inaccuracies were pointed out by Theobald, a much abler Shakespearean scholar in his *Shakespeare Restored* which was published in 1726. This infuriated Pope who made him the hero of the *Dunciad*. In 1730, Colley Cibber, a mediocre actor-dramatist, was appointed poet laureate and became in consequence the target of attack by many writers. Pope too was rattled and substituted Cibber for Theobald on the throne of dullness in the final edition of the *Dunciad*. To the minor fry of Grub street he was outrageously merciless. He laughed at them for their poverty. The *Dunciad* is undoubtedly clever and brilliant in its scorching abuse and made a great hit at the time, but it is a pity that Pope should have prostituted his admirable talents by devoting

them to the gratification of personal spite. It was obviously inspired by *MacFlecknoe*, but is decidedly inferior to it. Dryden's satire moves on a higher level. Though equally brilliant and devastating in his denunciations, Dryden never stoops so low as Pope. As regards the larger sweep and finer graces of *Absalom* and *Achitophel*, they were simply beyond his mean-minded disciple.

The Satires and Epistles, the last important works of Pope, were written in imitation of Horace. They are partly satirical and partly didactic. The two most famous are the *Essay on Man* and the *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot*.

The Essay on Man (1733-34) is, next to *Rape of the Lock*, the best known and most quoted of all Pope's works. It consists of four Epistles addressed to Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, and perhaps inspired by his Deistical writings Epistle I treats of man in relation to the universe, Epistle II of man in relation to himself, Epistle III of man in relation to society, and Epistle IV of man in relation to happiness. Like *Paradise Lost* its object is "to vindicate the ways of God to man", to show that the scheme of the universe is perfect, that God's providence is wise and just, that it is our limited vision which prevents our seeing this perfection, to show in effect that 'whatever is is right'. Since these ideas of God and the universe are prevalent among all mankind, critics have fallen foul of Pope on the ground that his philosophy is shallow and commonplace. They obviously have a sounder philosophy up their sleeve, which is more original and profound, but which they do not care to reveal. The proper criticism of the *Essay* is not that its philosophy lacks originality or depth, but that it lacks poetry. Its excellence lies in its aphoristic verse. It abounds in quotable lines such as the following:

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state.
Oh blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is but always *to be* blest.
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see;
All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is Right.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.

For forms of Government let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administered, is best.

Honour and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honour lies.

Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend.

Epistle to Arbuthnot published in 1735 was the prologue to the

satires and is one of Pope's most brilliant satires mixed with autobiography. It contains the famous satirical portrait of Addison, the 'Character of Atticus' an extract from which is given below—

Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
 Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
 Damn with faint praise assent with civil leer,
 And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
 Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike
 Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
 Alike reserved to blame or to commend,
 A timorous foe and a suspicious friend;
 Dreading even fools, by flatterers besieged,
 And so obliging that he ne'er obliged,
 Like Cato, give his little senate laws,
 And sit attentive to his own applause;
 While wits and Templars every sentence raise
 And wonder with foolish face of praise.
 Who but must laugh if such a man there be?
 Who would not weep if Atticus were he?

The following couplet is from his attack on Lord Hervey who too must have offended Pope in some way—

Satire or sense, alas ! can Sporus feel?
 Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?

A few more lines from *Satires and Epistles*—

There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl,
 The feast of reason and the flow of soul.
 The last and greatest art, the art to blot.
 Praise undeserved is scandal in disguise.

The following are from miscellaneous works of Pope—

Father of all ! in every age
 In every clime ador'd,
 By saint, by savage, and by sage,
 Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.

Teach me to feel another's woe
 To hide the fault I see;
 That mercy I to others show,
 That mercy show to me.

(*The Universal Prayer*)

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
 God said, "Let Newton be !" and all was light.

(*Eplthaph intended for Newton*)

The mouse that always trusts to one poor hole
 Can never be a mouse of any soul.

(*The Wife of Bath, Her Prologue*)

Party is the madness of many for the gain of a few.

I never knew any man in my life who could not bear another's misfortunes perfectly like a Christian.

(*Thoughts on various subjects*)

Pope's Place in English Poetry

Pope was regarded in his own time as the greatest poet of the 18th

century. His supremacy remained unchallenged until 1798 when Wordsworth and Coleridge led the revolt against him in their joint production, the *Lyrical Ballads*. Thereafter he fell upon evil days and the Romantics, Byron alone excepted, denied him even the title of poet, and Pope became the whipping boy of the 19th century. In the present century when poetry itself has fallen upon evil days, when the line of demarcation between poetry and prose has all but disappeared, Pope's fortunes have risen again. The wheel has come full circle.

Shifts of literary taste apart, Pope occupies a high place in English poetry in virtue of his metrical skill and artistic expression. He is not one of the greatest poets, but if literature is, among other things, the art of memorable expression, he is certainly one of the greatest men of letters. No other poet except Shakespeare has given us so many quotations. Pope was able to achieve this distinction by combining his gift of epigrammatic expression with complete mastery of the heroic couplet. He had taken over the couplet from Dryden whom he acknowledged to be his master, but he subjected it to further refinement, making it lighter, smoother, and more polished. He did this by avoiding the variations which Dryden had allowed himself in his couplet to suit the demands of mood and subject. Pope's couplet is almost always 'closed' or 'stopped', i.e., self-contained and complete in sense. There are no triplets, i.e., no additional or third line, as sometimes in Dryden. Dryden varied the metre now and then with anapaests, but in Pope the iambic beat is rarely broken and there is usually well-marked 'caesura' or pause about the middle of the line.

This chiselling and filing of the Drydenean couplet while it made it smoother, more compact and polished, robbed it of its flexibility. In Pope's hands it became rigid and in longer compositions monotonous. Its rigidity subordinated matter to form. Instead of the dress fitting the body, the body was forced to fit the dress. That it is easy to imitate has already been shown.

In spite of these drawbacks, however, it must be admitted that the Popean couplet was a conspicuous success in a special field. While it is too artificial for the greatest poetry, the couplet is the best medium for satire, and in its flexible form not unsuitable for narrative, descriptive or reflective poetry. It had been thus employed by Chaucer before, and after Pope was used by Johnson (*London*, *Vanity of Human wishes*), Goldsmith (*Traveller*) and even Crabbe.

Pope's ideal of poetry is contained in the famous lines—

True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.

The significant word is 'nature' which in the context of Pope and the 18th century meant life in general or the routine, the conventional (It had nothing to do with the 'Nature' of Wordsworth). This

is made clear by 'What oft was thought' in the second line, which is mere periphrasis, an exposition or elaboration of the first. In other words, 'nature' is the commonplace in thought or subject. Again, though it is Pope's definition of poetry, the word used is not poetry but 'wit' which among other connotations means capacity for brilliant expression in this context. In plain prose, therefore, true poetry according to Pope consists in dressing up the commonplace in a novel and artistic style. This was the theory of 'correctness' so dear to the 18th century. In other words, follow the beaten track in thought and subject, only give it an elegant expression.

Knowing that this was Pope's poetic ideal, it is idle, if not unreasonable, for the critics to complain that he lacks originality, passion, imagination and so forth—qualities which are generally associated with poetry. He must be judged by his own aims and ideals, and so judged, who can deny that he carried them out to marvellous perfection. Within the limits set by himself he is supreme or nearly so. (As a verse satirist he is sure of immortality along with Dryden and Butler. As a writer of didactic verse he has no equal. As a refiner and perfecter of the heroic couplet his position is impregnable. As a master of epigrammatic expression he is the verse counterpart of Bacon. Much has been made of the fact that he has been successfully imitated. ~~S~~Saintsbury quotes Cowper's remark that "every rhymester had the tune by heart."*) But Pope had something more than the tune. That something was genius, however limited the field in which it was displayed. And genius can never be imitated. Who among his so-called imitators has produced another *Rape of the Lock*, or another *Dunciad*, or another *Essay on Man*, or another *Epistle to Arbuthnot*? And it is these that constitute his chief title to fame. The house of poetry has many mansions, and one is certainly reserved for Pope, and that not the lowliest.)

Mathew Prior (1664-1721), the most important of the major group of Pope's seniors, is the greatest master of light verse in English. He was an amiable and loveable character, enjoyed extensive patronage of the great, rose to be an ambassador at the Hague and had a decisive hand in negotiating the Treaty of Utrecht. At the accession of the first George he was imprisoned for two years for his suspected complicity with the Jacobites. After his release his friends brought out a folio edition of his works which made him rich and increased his fame and popularity. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Prior was a poet of great versatility in both subject and form. Of his numerous works those deserving mention are: his burlesque of Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther* into *The Story of the Country and City Mouse*; *Henry and Emma*, a modernised version of the ballad of the *Nut-brown Maid*; *Alma or The Progress of the Mind*, a long poem in octosyllabic couplets on Vanity; *Solomon on the Vanity of the World*, a still longer poem in heroic couplets; *The Secretary* in anapaests on

* *A First Book of English Literature.*

his reminiscences as the Secretary to the Embassy; *Down Hall*, a sort of modern ballad, in anapaests, narrating a trip to Essex to see the estate (Down Hall) he had purchased; and finally and more important than all these, a large number of miscellaneous poems, light and non-serious in character which are comprehensively described as *Vers de Societie* or Society Verse.

Prior's amiable character is reflected in his works. His satire or rather satirical manner (for he did not write a complete satire, unless his burlesque of Dryden's religious poem referred to above be given that name) is urbane and good-natured, free equally from the grossness of Pope, the misanthropy of Swift and the harshness of Butler. His attempt to clothe the *Nut brown Maid* in the artificial style of the neo-classic age is a travesty of that fifteenth century ballad and demonstrates the limitations of that style and its utter unsuitability for the simplicity of primitive romance. Apart from this, however, Prior is the least artificial of the poets of an artificial age. His two long poems on vanity are not popular today, but parts of *Alma* which is Hudibrastic in style can still be read with pleasure. *The Secretary* and *Down Hall*, though exquisite in their trifling, are unimportant.

But Prior's title to fame rests not on these longer poems but on his *Vers de Societie* of which he remains the supreme master to this day. Society Verse is verse which is light and witty written on topical occasions. Prior's society poems comprise love-songs or lyrics, narrative, descriptive and philosophical pieces, and poems on children. The most famous examples are those addressed to his beloved, the mysterious 'Cloe', 'An English Padlock', 'Jinny the Just', 'Lines written in the Beginning of Mezeray's History of France' and 'To a Child of Quality Five Years Old—The Author Forty'.

Prior was not a mere wit, but a real humorist. His humour is playful, whimsical and graceful—airy and trifling on the surface but serious underneath. In fact it is this combination of humour and feeling which is his distinctive characteristic as a poet. The naturalness of his style coupled with epigrammatic archness of phrase gives to his seeming trivialities a charm not equalled in any other writer of light verse.

The following extracts should tempt the reader to go to the originals.

Was ever Tartar fierce or cruel
Upon the strength of water gruel?

(*Alma*)

What I speak, my fair Cloe, and what I write, shows
The diff'rence there is betwixt Nature and Art:
I court others in Verse; but I love Thee in Prose:
And they have my whimsies; but Thou hast my Heart.

So when I weary'd with wand'ring all day,
To Thee my Delight in the evening I come:
No matter what Beauties I saw in my way:
They were but my Visits; but Thou art my Home.

Then finish dear, Dear Cloe, this pastoral war;
 And let us like Horace and Lydia agree:
 For Thou art a Girl as much brighter than Her,
 As He was a Poet sublimer than Me.

(Answer to Cloe Jealous)

But of good household features her Person was made,
 Nor by faction cry'd up nor of censure afraid,
 And her beauty was rather for Use than Parade.
 So notions and modes she refer'd to the schools,
 And in matters of conscience adher'd to two rules,
 To advise with no bigots, and jest with no fools.

(Jinny the Just)

'An English Padlock' poses the old, old, problem of how to keep a wife chaste. For answer the inquisitive reader is referred to the original. The best handy collection of 18th century poems is *The Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*.

Lines written on Mezeray's History of France.

Mezeray (1603-88) was the author of what was regarded for long as the standard history of France, in which he recounted the glorious deeds of the French from the earliest times to those of Louis XIV. Prior in this short poem of just four stanzas slyly asks—

Yet for the fame of all these deeds,
 What beggar in the Invalides*
 With lameness broke, with blindness smitten,
 Wish'd ever decently to die,
 To have been either Mazeray
 Or any monarch he has written?

'To a Child of Quality'. This pretty poem was addressed to Lord Harley's daughter when she was five years old. Prior had lived for sometime in the house of his great patron. The fun as well as the pathos of a man of forty loving a girl of five is thus expressed in the concluding stanza—

For as our diff'rent ages move,
 'Tis so ordain'd, wou'd Fate but mend it,
 That I shall be past making love,
 When she begins to comprehend it.

John Gay (1685-1732) who was only slightly older than Pope excelled in the same kind of light verse and varied metres as Prior. He resembled Prior in most respects, but had less originality and distinction. He lived up to his name, being an indolent, easy-going Epicurean, most happily described by Saintsbury as 'a kind of human lap-dog'. He was in Pope's words—

Of manners gentle, of affections mild,
 In wit a man, simplicity a child.

*Disabled Soldiers' Home in Paris

He was petted and patronised by everybody and the Duke of Queensberry took him into his household and managed his affairs. He was the most lovable of the poets of his generation. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. On his monument is inscribed the epitaph written by himself—

Life is a jest, and all things show it;
I thought so once, and now I know it.

His earliest poem 'Wine', a parody of Milton, was quite in character, for in it he advanced the thesis that water-drinkers cannot be good authors. 'Rural Sports' was an imitation of Pope's 'Windsor'. The *Shepherd's Week* was a parody of Ambrose Philip's 'Pastorals'. It is a delightful realistic picture of country life and character in mock-heroic couplets. *Trivia or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* describes London streets and city manners in the same realistic-comic style. Interesting as these parodies are, Gay's first great success came with his *Fables* (1727). These are similar to the fables of Aesop and of the Sanskrit *Hitopdesha* in content, but being in mock-serious octosyllabic couplets are far more entertaining. Their success was followed by the still greater of the *Beggar's Opera* (1728), a musical drama in which his lyrical gift found the fullest expression in songs and ballads which are sweeter than Prior's. One of these the 'Black-Eyed Susan', together with some others from his plays, has found a permanent place in all anthologies of English poetry. The *Beggar's Opera* drove out the Italian opera, then in fashion, and started the vogue for native operas culminating in the famous comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan in the 19th century. The wits said that it made Rich, the producer gay, and Gay rich. Its sequel *Polly* was banned on the stage, but the ban proved a good advertisement and pushed up its sales. Of his shorter poems the one that deserves mention is *Mr. Pope's Welcome from Greece* written on his completing the translation of the *Iliad*. It is written in spirited ottava rima (a b a b a b c c) which together with its homely yet dignified phraseology makes it a first class complimentary poem.

Gay owes his lasting fame to the *Beggars Opera* which is still popular. His fables, unexcelled so far in English, seem to have declined in favour probably because they are not found in handy anthologies. Save for his superior lyrical powers, he was a lesser Prior.

The Court of Death

Death holding his court to choose a minister asks his attendants to plead their claims to the exalted office. Fever, Gout, Consumption, Plague, etc. each argues his peculiar fitness for the post, but they are all rejected in favour of Intemperance who has said nothing for himself, for says the sovereign—

Merit was ever modest known.
What! no physician speak his right?
None here! but fees their toils requite.
Let, then, Intemperance take the wand,
Who fills with gold their zealous hand.

You, Fever, Gout, and all the rest
 Whom wary men as foes detest
 Forego your claim. No more pretend;
 Intemperance is esteemed a friend;
 He shares their mirth, their social joys,
 And as a courted guest destroys.
 The charge on him must justly fall,
 Who finds employment for you all.

The Hare with Many Friends

A female hare who had many friends is pursued by a hunter. Tired and exhausted with running she lies panting on the highway. She appeals for help to her many friends who pass by her—the horse, the bull, the goat, the sheep, the calf—but though professing great friendship and concern, they all plead one excuse or other and go their way, abandoning the poor thing to her fate. Here is the Bull's reply.

Since every beast alive can tell
 That I sincerely wish you well,
 I may, without offence, pretend
 To take the freedom of a friend.
 Love calls me hence; a favourite cow
 Expects me near yon barley-mow;
 And when a lady's in the case,
 You know, all other things give place.
 To leave you thus might seem unkind;
 But see, the Goat is just behind.

The Beggar's Opera. The play was the result of Swift's suggestion to Gay that a Newgate pastoral 'might make an odd pretty sort of thing'. And an odd pretty sort of thing it is. Peecham, a receiver of stolen goods also carries on the side-business of informing against his own clients. His pretty daughter falls in love with Captain Macheath, a highwayman, who has easy success with women. Polly marries him, which makes Peecham furious. Regardless of his daughter's feelings, he informs against Macheath, who is arrested and sent to Newgate prison. There Lucy, the daughter of Lockit, the warder, falls in love with him and a fierce conflict between the two girls follows. In spite of jealousy, however, Lucy helps Macheath to escape from prison. Here is a song from the play:

Macheath Were I laid on Greenland's coast,
 And in my arms embrac'd my lass;
 Warm amidst eternal frost,
 Too soon the half-year's night would pass.

Polly Were I sold on Indian soil,
 Soon as the burning day was clos'd.
 I could mock the sultry toil
 When on my charmer's breast repos'd.

Macheath And I would love you all the day,

Polly Every night would kiss and play,

Macheath If with me you'd fondly stray

Polly Over the hills and far away.

And here is an example of Gay's wit—

The fly that sips treacle is lost in the sweets;
So he that tastes woman ruin meets.

(*Sweet William's Farewell to Black-Eyed Susan*)

The concluding stanza—

The boatswain gave the dreadful word,
The sails their swelling bosom spread,
No longer must she stay aboard :
They kiss'd, she sigh'd, he hung his head.
Her less'ning boat, unwilling rows to land:
Adieu, she cries and wav'd her lily hand.

(*Ibid*)

Edward Young (1683-1765), like Gay, only a few years older than Pope was a satiric and didactic poet. His 'Universal Passion', a series of witty and brilliant satires on Love of Fame, was very popular until eclipsed by Pope's which came later. He is remembered principally by his still famous but little read *Night Thoughts* in fine declamatory blank verse. It is a lengthy didactic poem in nine books containing reflections on Life, Death, and Immortality together with exhortations to Faith and Virtue. Personal disappointments and bereavements had much to do with young's gloomy reflections. It has some fine things, but with its gloomy pessimism, over-strained sentiment, exaggeration, and ineatricality, the poem is tiresome. Extracts follow:

The Manly Lady

(Vain is the task to Petticoats assign'd,
If wanton language shews a *naked* mind.)
If thunder's awful, how much more our dread,
When Jove deutes a Lady in his stead.
A *Lady* ! pardon my mistaken pen,
A shameless woman is the worst of *Men*.

(*Love of Fame, Satire V*)

Night Thoughts

Procrastination is the thief of Time.

At thirty man suspects himself a fool;
Knows it at forty, and reforms his plan;
At fifty chides his infamous delay
Pushes his prudent purpose to *resolve*
In all the magnanimity of thought:
Resolves; and re-resolves: then dies the same.

(*Book I*)

Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) also of the Pope-Swift group was not a great poet, but might have been one had he lived longer. His wife's death which he took too much to heart is said to have hastened his death. The lyric element in him was greater than in any other of this group. This is shown in such poems as 'A Hymn to Contentment' and

A Nightpiece on Death', both in octosyllabics. The 'Nightpiece' is a sombre reflection on Death in the manner of Gray's *Elegy*, interspersed with descriptions of natural scenery unusual for the times. The one poem, however, by which he lives is the famous *Hermit*, an Eastern moral fable. As a didactic poem it has no competitor in the 18th century. That its heroic couplets are extremely artificial may worry the technicians of poetry, not the average reader.

Anne, Countess of Winchelsea (1661-1721), very much older than Pope was like Parnell in her love of natural scenery. Though inferior to Parnell, she belongs with him as an unconscious rebel against the Popean convention. Her 'Petition for an Absolute Retreat', 'The Tree' and, above all, 'A Nocturnal Reverie' demonstrate her genuine lyrical impulse as much as her feeling for the beauties of Nature.

The following extracts from Parnell and the Countess should be compared.

Parnell:

A Night-piece on Death

How deep yon Azure dyes the sky (dyes, colours)
Where orbs of gold unnumber'd lye,
While through their ranks in silver pride
The nether Crescent seems to glide.
The slumb'ring breeze forgets to breathe,
The lake is smooth and clear beneath,
Where once again the spangled show
Descends to meet our eyes below.

There pass with melancholy state (graves)
By all the solemn heaps of Fate
And think, as softly-sad you tread
Above the venerable Dead,
Time was, like thee they life possest,
And Time shall be, that thou shall rest.
Those graves, with bending osier bound,
That nameless heave the crumbled ground,
Quick to the glancing thought disclose
Where *Toil* and *Poverty* repose.

Winchelsea:

A Nocturnal Reverie

When nibbling sheep at large pursue their food,
And unmolested kine rechew the cud;
When curlews cry beneath the village walls,
And to her straggling brood the partridge calls;
Their short-liv'd jubilee the creatures creep,
Which but endures, whilst Tyrant-Men do's sleep;
When a sedate content the spirit feels,
And no fierce light disturbs, whilst it reveals;
But silent musings urge the mind to seek
Something too high for syllables to speak.

Minor Poets

Sir Samuel Garth (1660-1718), Sir Richard Blackmore (1654?—1729), Ambrose Phillips (1674-1749), Thomas Tickell (1688-1740), Issac Watts (1674-1748), Henry Carey (born about 1700, died 1743), David Mallet (1705-1765), Allan Ramsay (1686-1758).

Garth and Blackmore both noted physicians were also copious writers of verse. Garth owes his place in English poetry to his *Dispensary* (1699), a mock-heroic poem on the subject of a quarrel between the physicians and the apothecaries or druggists. The apothecaries claimed the right to prescribe medicines, which was opposed by the doctors. Blackmore, the favourite butt of the satirists, is remembered chiefly for his *Creation* (1712) a didactic poem in rhetorical couplets, in which he, like so many others of his day, justifies the ways of God to man. The mountains and hills, for example, he says God made not for their beauty, but because of their utility as store-houses of gold and minerals and timber for ships, as also sources of rivers and streams. The poem, because of its piety, was highly praised by Addison and Johnson.

Ambrose Phillips and Tickell were both friends of Addison and therefore enemies of Pope. Tickell's translation of the first book of the *Iliad* appeared about the same time as Pope's and received very high praise. Pope thought it to be instigated by Addison with the purpose of eclipsing his. This was the origin of Pope's quarrel with Addison. The breach was never healed. Criticism has been rather unjust to these friends of Addison in suggesting that they owe their immortality to the satirists. Both can stand on their own merits. Ambrose Phillips whose pastorals were parodied by Gay also wrote pretty-pretty sentimental children's verses for which he was nicknamed Namby-Pamby by Carey. Quite apart from these, however, Phillips deserves to be remembered for his *Winter Piece* (1709), a short poem addressed to the Earl of Dorset from Copenhagen. It is a magnificent piece of nature-painting in couplets, which can take its place beside the best of Thomson's.

Tickell has two things to his credit: an *Elegy* on the death of Addison, and a ballad *Colin and Lucy*. The *Elegy* in stately couplets expresses genuine grief and adoration, far above the conventional level of witty compliments of the 18th century. The ballad is one of the best in the English language.

Issac Watts is a classic of devotional hymns and children's poems. It is rather strange that his extreme simplicity should have obscured his great merit in both these kinds. Here are two little extracts from famous hymns:

There is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite Day excludes the Night,
And Pleasures banish pain

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our Hope for years to come,

Our Shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal Home.

Henry Carey besides giving 'namby-pamby' to the English language while ridiculing Ambrose Phillips, is well known for his famous song *Salley in our Alley*. Mallet's claim to remembrance rests on his pathetic ballad *William and Margaret*.

Allan Ramsay, the Scottish poet achieved distinction with his pastoral drama *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725) which is a realistic portrayal of Scottish rustic humours without any of the coarseness of Gay. Though an original and competent writer of verse, both Scottish and English, he is really more important historically as the principal figure in the revival of Scottish vernacular poetry which had been almost dead during the greater part of the 16th and the whole of the 17th century. By publishing the *Tea-table Miscellany* (1724-32) containing poems by himself and his contemporaries, and *The Evergreen*, a collection of old Scottish songs written before 1600, he did more than anybody else to create and diffuse a love for Scottish secular poetry which culminated in the work of such great poets as Ferguson and Burns.

CHAPTER 25

THE AGE OF JOHNSON: POETRY

Thomson—His great poems: *The Seasons*, *The Castle of Indolence*—His intrinsic and historical importance—Dyer—His *Grongar Hill*—Minor poets—Shenstone—His *School-mistress*—Collins—His *Odes*—Gray—His famous *Elegy* and the Pindaric Odes—His high poetic quality—The revival of Medieval Literature: Macpherson's *Ossian*, Hurd's *Essays on Chivalry and Romance*, Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, Percy's *Reliques*, Chatterton's *Rowley Poems*, Tyrwhitt's *Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer*, Warton's *History of English Poetry*—Johnson—His two major poems—Goldsmith—His *Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*.

James Thomson (1700-1748), who is credited with having started a school of poetry opposed to that of Pope, came to London in 1725. His great work *The Seasons* (1726-30), was an immediate success and brought him friends and patrons, pensions and appointments which made him comfortable for the rest of his life. He had known the Scottish scenery intimately and now in his suburban retreat at Richmond with its garden, hedges and fields as also the view from Richmond hill of the quiet and luxuriant Thames Valley, he could indulge his passion for nature in lovely English scenes.

The Seasons, a blank verse poem in four books, one for each season, is remarkable for the author's minute observation and faithful description of the changing face of nature with the march of the seasons. There had been nature poetry before (indeed it has never been absent from English poetry) but nature and its joys had been merely a background. In Thomson nature fills the entire canvas—the whole long poem of *The Seasons* consists mainly, if not exclusively, of descriptions of nature. In his passionate devotion to nature and its joys Thomson was a leader in a branch of poetry that has attracted so many distinguished followers and of which Wordsworth is the greatest master. It is also important to note that Thomson had the good sense to reject the Popean couplet as unsuited to his subject and choose Milton's blank verse as his metre. His blank verse may not be as grand as Milton's, but it is as skilfully managed as his subject demanded.

The four 'seasons' offer such a wide variety of scenes and moods that there is in all something to delight individual tastes. Here is the

enchancing picture from 'Winter' of a red-breast (लाल or ललमुनिया) driven by the snowstorm into a room—

The fowls of heaven, Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around the winnowing store, and claim the little boon which Providence assigns them. One alone, The red-breast, sacred to the household gods, Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky, In joyless fields and thorny thicket leaves His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man, His annual visit. Half afraid, he first against the window beats; then, brisk, alights. On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor, Eyes all the smiling family askance, And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is: Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs Attract his slender feet.

Thomson's second great work *The Castle of Indolence* appeared in 1748 only a few months before his death. As poetry simply, it is a more accomplished performance than *The Seasons*. Written in Spenserian stanza it imitates the medieval allegory personifications, moral lesson and other trappings used by Spenser. It is a poem in two cantos, the first of which describes the castle of the enchanter Indolence who entices the weary mortals of the earth. Everything about the castle—its sylvan seclusion, its soothing sights and sounds, its sensuous delights—invites to indolence and repose. Among the pilgrims are some real persons of the day including the poet himself, who are satirically sketched. They are soon overcome by lethargy and inertia and sinking into disease and decrepitude, are thrown into a dungeon to rot. The second canto describes the storming and destruction of the Castle by the Knights of Arms and Industry, thus enforcing the moral without which no poem of the 18th century was considered complete. The first canto is the better of the two. The author himself being indolent and ease-loving, his description of the dale of Indolence is the most magnificent thing in eighteenth century poetry. Nothing like this was to appear until Keats wrote *The Eve of St. Agnes*. The choice of the Spenserian stanza was a happy stroke of genius. Its dreamy music fits in so well with the spirit of indolence, and must have soothed and relaxed the ears tired with the jerky, snappy monotony of the couplet.

Thomson wrote several minor poems and plays which though they brought him material rewards, have little value beyond showing his varied poetic talents. Only the two poems analysed above have enduring charm and are the solid foundation of his reputation. Literary criticism that must tabulate beauties as well as defects may point out their weakness—padding, pompous diction, artificiality, sentimentality and the rest, but who cares? At worst, they were part of the convention of the age, and Thomson was after all of the 18th century. He deserves full credit due to an initiator or innovator. For great as is the intrinsic worth of his poetical works—they rank next only to the greatest—their historical importance is even greater. With them began the poetry of nature and the 'country' which as a rival attraction to Pope's artificial poetry of the 'town' in the end supplanted it and led to some of the greatest triumphs of the Romantics.

The following two stanzas are from the *Castle of Indolence*:

A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was;
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky.
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh,
But whate'er smackt of noyance, or unrest,
Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest.

The pilgrims see, as in a dream, numberless fairy forms in the court of the castle—

As when a shepherd of the Hebrid Isles,
Placed far amid the melancholy main
(Whether it be lone Fancy him beguiles;
Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
To stand embodied, to our senses plain),
Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
The whilst in ocean Phoebus dips his wain,
A vast assembly moving to and fro:
Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show. . .

John Dyer (1699-1758). Mountain scenery has inspired many British poets. One such was John Dyer, a Welshman, who tried law and painting before finally taking orders. His *Gronger Hill* which appeared about the same time as Thomson's *Winter* (1726) is remarkable for its fine description of natural scenery. Gronger Hill on the river Towy in Wales commands a magnificent view which is described in this short poem of about 200 lines with a zest which betokens genuine poetic feeling for nature. It is written in the octosyllabic couplet of Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* which runs trippingly on the tongue with a musical charm all its own. It is surprising that Saintsbury finds its rhymes 'uncertain' and its grammar 'dubious'. It is a little gem. Here are a few lines—

Ever charming, ever new,
When will the landskip tire the view!
The fountain's fall, the river's flow,
The woody valleys, warm and low;
The windy summit, wild and high,
Roughly rushing on the sky!
The pleasant seat, the ruined tower,
The naked rock, the shady bower;
The town and village, dome and farm,
Each give each a double charm,
As pearls upon an Ethiop's arm.

His other poems *The Ruins of Rome* and *The Fleece* (on sheep and wool trade) are not uninteresting, but have lost their appeal because of their subjects. If he had written only these, he would have been forgotten like so many other versifiers of the 18th century who

thought that any subject was good enough if it were only dressed in the so-called 'poetic diction'. Many of the inferior imitators of Pope as well as others who wrote differently but with indifferent poetic sensibility are buried in the pages of Dodsley's miscellany and Chalmers or are remembered because they are included in Johnson's *Lives*. Some of them—John Armstrong, Mark Akenside, Richard Savage, Charles Churchill, Christopher Smart, etc.—have been salvaged by literary historians, but at best they are literary curiosities.

No such salvaging is necessary in the case of Shenstone who, though a minor poet of this period, has enough individuality to be noticed in any history of English poetry.

William Shenstone (1714-63), an Oxford scholar, passed most of his life of less than fifty years on his country estate, and was more famous in his century for ornamental landscape gardening and fancy agriculture than for poetry. He had poetic ambitions and had not a little of the real poet in him, but his devotion to the muse was rather half-hearted, distracted as he was by the pursuit of the other hobby which wasted his modest fortune and darkened his later days. He attempted many things—elegies, odes, songs, humorous pieces etc.—but is remembered now by the descriptive sketch of *The Schoolmistress* (1742) and the charming short poem 'Written at an Inn at Henley'. *The Schoolmistress* is in imitation of Spenser and is written in his stanza. The poem, in part at least, gives the impression of a burlesque of Spenser. It is artificial and full of sentimentality. It is a far cry from Goldsmith's picture of the village Schoolmaster. The following lines may have suggested to Gray the thought of 'some mute inglorious Milton'—

A little bench of heedless bishops¹ here,
And there a chancellor in embryo.

Here is the last stanza of the delightful piece 'Written at an Inn at Henley'—

Whoe'er has travelld life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.

The greater poets of this period besides Thomson are Gray and Collins. They occupy a middle position between the classical school and the romantic.

William Collins (1721-59) studied at Oxford but left the University suddenly presumably because of his mental condition, for during a great part of his short life he was insane. He was full of ambitious schemes but lacked firmness of purpose and industry. In these respects he resembles Coleridge. He is famous for his odes written in different lyrical measures, the *Dirge in Cymbeline* and the pretty

though a little thin elegy on the poet Thomson. Of the odes the more important are on 'The Passions', 'Evening', 'The Superstitions of the Highlands' and the best of them all 'How Sleep the Brave'. The 'Ode to Evening' has been selected by critics for special praise, but it is not clear why. Its images are far-fetched and it is not even as musical as the others. The Ode on 'The Superstitions of the Highlands' which describes and extols the simple faith in magic and mystery, ghosts and fairies, foreshadowed the romantic revival.

The lyrical powers of Collins are confirmed by the odes, but to call him the greatest lyrist of the 18th century is surely an exaggeration. His feeling for nature has little intensity. Even a graver fault is the too obvious artificiality resulting from over-refinement. The artificiality in Thomson and Gray can be ignored, for the tide of their poetry carries everything before it. The tinsel of the Popean school in Collins is not supported by the requisite poetic sinews. On the whole, Collins is an over-rated poet, the over-rating being due presumably to his unmistakable romantic leanings. Here is the charming 'How sleep the Brave'—

How sleep the brave who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod,
Than fancy's feet have ever trod.
By fairy hands their knell is rung,
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
There Honour comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay,
And Freedom shall a while repair,
To dwell, a weeping hermit there!

[**Gray** (1716-71). The reputation of Gray has a more solid foundation. Thomas Gray, son of a businessman of London, was educated at Eton and Cambridge. The poet's melancholy is said to have been due to his mother's separation from her husband because of his violent and harsh temper. He had some independent means and lived in lettered ease in the University for most of his life. An interesting anecdote is related of him. A false alarm of fire—a practical joke played on him by the undergraduates—made him shift from Peterhouse to Pembroke. He was well versed in the classics, specially Greek, and all his work is instinct with the Greek spirit. He was also considered the greatest scholar of his day in modern European literature. His letters are among the best in the language. He declined the poet-laureateship after the death of Cibber, and was appointed Professor of History at Cambridge.

The total bulk of his poetry is very small, but it is first rate and unique. It has the impress of strong individuality. As the author of the 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' he has endeared himself to millions all over the world. General Wolfe is said to have remarked on his death-bed that he would rather be the author of

the *Elegy* than the conqueror of Quebec. Palgrave who would have excluded the *Elegy* from his *Golden Treasury* on account of its length had to make an exception in its favour on the insistence of Tennyson. Dr Johnson's critical hostility to Gray was as unreasonable as that to Milton. Yet even he could not withhold praise from the *Elegy* which, he says, abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.

The setting of the poem, the truth and sincerity of the sentiments, its classic restraint, choice yet simple diction, the music of the elegiac quatrain—all are harmoniously combined to produce a symphony that strikes a sympathetic chord in every human heart. The melancholy reflections of the following stanzas are universal in their appeal—

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

(Besides the *Elegy* which though begun in 1742 was finished in 1750, Gray's poetical works include his odes, 'On Spring', 'On a Distant Prospect of Eton College', 'On Adversity', 'On the Death of a Favourite Cat' (his friend Walpole's) and the two Pindaric Odes *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*. His studies in Icelandic and Celtic languages resulted in two imitative poems 'The Fatal Sisters' and 'The Descent of Odin', undoubted forerunners of romanticism. The familiar quotations 'Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise', is the last line of the 'Eton' ode. The ode on the 'Favourite Cat' shows that the melancholy Gray was not devoid of humour. The cat was drowned while trying to catch 'gleaming' gold fish that were swimming in a tub. 'A favourite has no friend' is a quotation from this poem which also contains the amusing lines—

What female heart can gold despise?
What Cat's averse to fish?

But the most famous as well as the most finished of the odes are the Pindarics *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*. They with their regular patterns and varied music are the best Pindaric odes in English. The *Poesy* ode traces the origin of poetry in Greece and describes its progress thence through Italy to England. It also describes the power and charm of poetry and then the triumphs achieved by Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden. It ends with the lament that the voice of poetry is heard no more.

The Bard is based on a Welsh legend that Edward I after his conquest of Wales had all the bards that fell into his hands put to

death.) A surviving bard, together with the ghosts of his slain companions, pronounces a curse on Edward's race and foretells its misfortunes and ultimate doom in the Wars of the Roses. Then the bard sings of the glories that will attend the Welsh house of Tudor and of the great poets of the Elizabethan age. As the ghosts vanish, the bard hurls himself headlong from the mountain's height into the roaring tide below. Though both the Pindarics are powerful, *The Bard* is certainly more dramatic and picturesque than *The Progress of Poesy*.

Gray's poetry, though scanty in volume, is of the highest quality. The academic hare started by Matthew Arnold that Gray never 'spoke out' because he was born in an age of prose may be chased by those fond of speculative criticism. What is pertinent is the quality of what he *did* produce. And this has never been disputed by any competent and impartial critic. Finicky critics indeed pick holes in Gray's poetry on the score of its ready-made diction, personifications and other conventions of the classical school, but they are trivial things and only show that Gray was a poet of his times and either would not or could not shake himself entirely free from the shackles of the prevailing fashion. But that he was discontented with it is clear. He avoided the couplet altogether in favour of lyrical measures. That he was romantic in feeling is equally clear, but he expressed it with classic restraint. It is this combination of romantic feeling and classic restraint that gives to his poetry its unique character. Gray was a very painstaking and conscientious artist. Everything he has written has elegance, conciseness, clarity and artistic finish that place him in the front rank of English poets. It is sheer pedantry, if not critical timidity, to assign him a place below the greatest. Two stanzas—one each from *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* follow—

Far from the sun and summer gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's darling laid (Shakespeare)
What time, where lucid Avon strayed,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face : the dauntless child
Stretched forth his little arms, and smiled.
'This pencil take', she said, 'whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine, too, these golden keys, immortal boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy;
Of Honour that, and thrilling Fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic Fears'.

(From *The Progress of Poesy*)

Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing,
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm, nor hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor e'en thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears!
Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride

Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,
 As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
 He wound with toilsome march his long array.
 Stout Glo'ster stood aghast in speechless trance:
 'To arms!' cried Mortimer, and couched his quivering lance.

(From *The Bard*)

The Revival of Medieval Literature

In all these poets—Thomson, Dyer, Shenstone, Gray—one discerns a certain feeling of discontent; a yearning, one might say, for something natural, primitive or elemental, together with a hunger for romance; for something 'remote and afar' that is not to be found in Pope and his followers. The Middle Ages were the home of romance and the antiquarians of the 17th century like Sir William Temple had re-discovered them. Eagerness for romance had always existed, despite Pope, in the 18th century and Addison had praised the ballad of 'Chevy Chase' in the *Spectator*. It was, however, Gray who expressed this eagerness unmistakably in his *Bard* (1757) and later in his Icelandic poems *The Descent of Odin* and *The Fatal Sisters* (1761). Then between 1760 and 1775 there appeared a remarkable series of independent publications which manifested a general interest in medieval English literature, foreshadowing the great romantic movement at the extreme end of the century. These were: (1) Macpherson's *Ossian* (1760-63), (2) Hurd's *Essays on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), (3) Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), (4) Percy's *Reliques* (1765), (5) Chatterton's *Rowley* poems (1768-69, Pub. 1778 and 1782), (6) Tyrwhitt's *Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer*, (7) Warton's *History of English Poetry* (3 Vols., 1774, 78, 81), (8) James Beattie's *Minstrel* (1771-74).

Macpherson's Ossian. As *Ossian* has made a good deal of controversial noise it is as well to know a little about its author. James Macpherson (1736-96) was a Scottish schoolmaster, a University man with considerable literary ability, made a fortune by his *Ossian*, was employed by the Government, and finally became a Member of Parliament. The *Ossian* which together with other fragments contained two epics *Fingal* and *Temora* purported to be translations from the Gaelic of Ossian, a warrior poet, the son of Fingal (Finn in Irish), supposed to have lived in the third century. Ossian, old and blind, sings of the brave and magnanimous deeds of Fingal and his heroic band of warriors. The story is continued in *Temora* which is the name of the palace of the kings of Ulster. As Scotland and Ireland are both inhabited by Gaels, the Gaelic legends are common to both. Macpherson turns the Irish Finn into a Scot to glorify his own country. Facts of Irish history are treated against the background of mythology, and persons and events separated by centuries are mixed up indiscriminately.

The Ossianic poems tell of heroic battles and romantic loves against the gloomy and misty background of a wild country of seas and mountains. They have a deep tinge of melancholy so characteristic of the romantic poets. They embody, in fact, the very spirit of

romance as expressed in Wordsworth's 'Reaper' who sang of 'old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago'. They are written in a kind of poetic prose or blank verse which at times rises to great power and achieves real pathos.

The genuineness of *Ossian* was challenged immediately by scholars, Dr Johnson among them. Macpherson was asked to produce his originals. He had none, but he made up the Gaelic texts himself and that too for only some of his supposed translations. It is now established that no Gaelic text existed before Macpherson and that his poems were a fraud. He had probably some basis in fragmentary oral traditions of Gaelic poetry, and being ambitious of literary fame produced something which he hoped would supply a great demand. He succeeded in his purpose and *Ossian* thrilled the whole of Europe including Goethe and Napoleon. He was original in his own way and though his poems can have little interest today, he had immense vogue at the time and has a definite place in the history of literature as well as in that of literary fraud.

Two extracts follow—

Ossian's Address to the Sun

O thou that rollest above, round as the shield of my fathers! Whence are thy beams, O sun! thy everlasting light? Thou comest forth in thy awful beauty; the stars hide themselves in the sky; the moon, cold and pale sinks in the western wave; but thou thyself movest alone. Who can be a companion of thy course? The oaks of the mountains fall; the mountains themselves decay with years; the ocean shrinks and grows again; the moon herself is lost in heaven, but thou art for ever the same, rejoicing in the brightness of thy course. When the world is dark with tempests, when thunder rolls and lightning flies, thou lookest in thy beauty from the clouds, and laughest at the storm. But to Ossian thou lookest in vain, for he beholds thy beams no more; whether thy yellow hair flows on the eastern clouds, or thou tremblest at the gates of the west. But thou art perhaps like me, for a season; thy year will have an end. Thou shalt sleep in thy clouds, careless of the voice of the morning. Exult, then, O sun, in the strength of thy youth! Age is dark and unlovely; it is like the glimmering light of the moon when it shines through broken clouds, and the mist is on the hills: the blast of the north is on the plain; the traveller shrinks in the midst of his journey.

The Songs of Selma

Rise, moon! from behind thy clouds. Stars of the night, arise! Lead me, some light, to the place where my love rests from the chase alone! his bow near him, unstrung; his dogs panting around him. But here I must sit alone, by the rock of the mossy stream. The stream and the wind roar aloud. I hear not the voice of my love! Why delays my Salgar why the chief of the hill his promise? Here is the rock, and here the tree! here is the roaring stream! Thou didst promise with night to be here. Ah! whither is my Salgar gone? With thee I would fly from my father; with thee from brother of pride. Our race have long been foes: we are not foes, O Salgar!

Interest in chivalry and romance thus roused was further promoted by Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, which disparaged Pope and praised the great romancers Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser. Horace Walpole's gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* with its 12th century setting of a castle haunted by a giant ghost had much the

same effect in strengthening medievalism and the romantic tendency. But none of these had anything like the effect of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Percy, an Oxford man and later a Bishop, found in a friend's house an old Folio manuscript which proved a mine of ballads and other older poetry. After editing and adapting some of his material, he published his famous collection which did more in reviving medievalism than *Ossian* which, in fact, pertained to the Dark Ages and *The Castle of Otranto* which was a novel and not poetry. The influence of Percy's *Reliques* on the romantic poets of the next generation cannot be overestimated.

Shortly after the *Reliques* came Chatterton's 'Rowley' poems. The son of a poor choral singer in the Gothic cathedral of Bristol, Chatterton (1752-70) received five years' schooling and was apprenticed to an attorney. Falling under the fascination of the Middle Ages he began writing in the medieval manner, attributing his poems to T. Rowley, an imaginary 15th century poet of Bristol. The 'Rowley' poems were soon discovered to be a hoax which deceived only the most credulous. He succeeded for a time and came to London to seek his literary fortune. Driven to extreme poverty and starvation and refusing to beg or sponge, he committed suicide by taking arsenic, dying before he was 18.

Only a fragment of his poems appeared in his life-time, his complete works being published after his death. These are of two kinds: his own acknowledged poems in ordinary English and those supposedly written by Rowley. Chatterton's poems have the faults of youth, but they, specially the 'Rowley' pieces, are not without charm. Other critics have dwelt more on his deceit than on the poems themselves. They reveal a poetical genius who would have risen to great heights, had he lived longer. His influence on the romantic revolution was substantial enough to draw high tributes to his genius from Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley. He has an assured place in the history of English poetry among 'the inheritors of unfulfilled renown'. The first of the two extracts that follow is from an acknowledged poem, the second from *Rowley*.

The Prophecy, a Political Satire

This truth of old was sorrow's friend—
 'Times at the worst will surely mend.'
 The difficulty's then to know
 How long Oppression's clock can go;
 When Britain's sons may cease to sigh,
 And hope that their redemption's nigh...
 When vile Corruption's brazen face
 At council-board shall take her place;
 And lords and commoners resort
 To welcome her at Britain's court;
 Look up, ye Britons! cease to sigh,
 For your redemption draweth nigh.

Freedom

Whan Freedom, dreste ym blodde-steyned veste,
 To everie knyghte her warre-songe sunge,

Uponne her hedde wylde wedes were spredde;
 A gorie anlace bye her honge
 She daunced onne the heathe;
 She hearde the voice of deathe;
 Pale-eyned Aff-ryghte, hys harte of sylver hue,
 In vayne assayed her bosomme to acale;
 She hearde onflemed the shriekynge voice of woe,
 And sadnesse ynn the owlette shake the dale.
 She shooke the burled speere,
 On hie she jeste her sheelde,
 Her foemen all appere,
 And flizze along the feelde.
 Power, wythe his heafod straught ynto the skyes,
 Hys speere a sonne-beame, and hys sheelde a starre,
 Alyche twaie brendeynge gronfyres rolls hys eyes,
 Chaftes with hys yronne fete soundes to war.
 She syttes upon a rocke,
 She bendes before hys speere,
 She ryses from the shocke,
 Wielynge her owne yn ayre.
 Harde as the thonder dothe she drive ytte on,
 Wytte, scillye wympled gides ytte to hys crowne,
 Hys longe sharpe speere, hys spreddynge sheelde ys gon,
 He falles, and fallynge rolleth thousandes down.
 War goare-faced war, bie envie burld, arist
 Hys feerie heaulme noddynge to the ayre,
 Tenne bloddie arrowes ynn hys streynynge fyste.

Tyrwhitt's *Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer* and his *Introductory Discourse to the Canterbury Tales* revived interest in Chaucer. Chatterton had consulted Chaucer only for his words and their fantastic spellings, Dryden had been fascinated by his classic simplicity, but it was Tyrwhitt who by an almost miraculous instinct hit upon the secret of his versification nearly four hundred years after his death. But the work which second only to Percy's *Reliques* had the greatest impact upon medieval studies was Thomas Warton's *History of English Poetry* (3 vols, 1774, 78, 81). Warton traces the course of English poetry from its earliest beginnings down to the Elizabethan age which he calls 'the most poetical age in our annals'. This was a revelation to the 18th century which regarded itself as superior to all earlier ages and thought that the earlier poets were boorish and unpolished. It was a pioneer work of the first importance which in spite of its shortcomings greatly reinforced the reaction against the Popean conception of poetry in favour of the romantic. Warton, Professor of Poetry and later of History at Oxford, was also a poet, but his poems are notable only for his revival of the sonnet, a favourite poetic form with romantics.

To conclude the list, the *Minstrel* (1771-74) by James Beattie, though a mediocre poem, has nevertheless the historical importance of a pioneering work in the romantic line with its touches of nature, chivalry, and the supernatural.

The cumulative effect of these excursions into the Middle Ages was great, but it did not lead to any revolution immediately. Pope had cast a long shadow and his influence was still dominant. Dr

Johnson (1709-84), the greatest literary figure of the third quarter of the century, though not without a certain vein of romance himself, tended on the whole to throw his weight on the side of Pope and classicism.

Though Johnson's major achievements were in prose and even more in his personality, his verse is not as mediocre as is commonly supposed. It is small in bulk, but is as characteristic of the man as his other and better-known work. In addition to a few occasional pieces he wrote two considerable satires in imitation of Juvenal: *London* (1738) and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). Written strictly in accordance with the rules of classical criticism, they are the utterances of his heart and as such are personal documents. Their key-note is sincerity and they are tinged with melancholy if not actual pessimism. Johnson the moralist surveys the human scene and depicts it in his characteristic pompous diction. The style is declamatory but eloquent.

In *London*, Johnson denounces the contemporary society of the metropolis: the oppression of the poor, the arrogance of the rich, the French fashions and the dangerous hooligans and criminals. Johnson's early struggles had made him familiar with poverty and the following extract has the authentic stamp of personal experience—

Poverty in London

By Numbers here from Shame or Censure free,
 All Crimes are safe, but hated Poverty.
 This, only this, the rigid Law pursues,
 This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse;
 The sober Trader at a tatter'd Cloak,
 Wakes from his Dream, and labours for a Joke;
 With brisker Air the silken Courtiers gaze,
 And turn the varied Taunt a thousand Ways.
 Of all the Grievs that harass the Distrest,
 Sure the most bitter is a scornful Jest;
 Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous Heart
 Than when a Blockhead's Insult points the Dart.

Has Heaven reserv'd, in Pity to the Poor,
 No pathless Waste, or undiscover'd Shore,
 No secret Island in the boundless Main?
 No peaceful Desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
 Quick let us rise the happy Seats explore,
 And bear Oppression's Insolence no more,
 This mournful Truth is ev'ry where confest,
 Slow Rises Worth, By Poverty Deprest :
 But here more slow, where all are Slaves to Gold,
 Where Looks are Merchandise, and Smiles are sold,
 Where won by Bribes, by Flatteries implor'd,
 The Groom retails the Favours of his Lord.

(*London*)

Good as *London* is, it is surpassed by *The Vanity of Human Wishes* which is even more characteristic of the author in his role of the moralist. He considers the various objects of human ambition—wealth and power, science and learning, military glory, beauty, longevity—and finds them all vain and empty, as exemplified in the

lives of the great such as Cardinal Wolsey, Galileo, Charles of Sweden, Marlborough etc.

Here is a picture of the Scholar's life—

The Scholar's Life

When first the College Rolls receive his Name,
The young Enthusiast quits his Ease for Fame;
Thro' all his Veins the Fever of Renown
Burns from the strong Contagion of the Gown;
O'er Bodley's Dome his future Labours spread,
And Bacon's Mansion trembles o'er his Head;
Are these thy Views? proceed, illustrious Youth,
And Virtue guard thee to the Throne of Truth.
Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous Heat
Till captive Science yields her last Retreat;
Should Reason guide thee with her brightest Ray,
And pour on misty Doubt resistless Day;
Should no false Kindness lure to loose Delight,
Nor Praise relax, nor Difficulty fright;
Should tempting Novelty thy Cell refrain,
And Sloth effuse her opiate Fumes in Vain;
Should Beauty blunt on Fops her fatal Dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a letter'd Heart;
Yet hope not Life from Grief or Danger free,
Nor think the Doom of Man revers'd for thee.
Deign on the passing World to turn thine Eyes
And pause a while from Letters to be wise;
There mark what Ills the Scholar's Life assail,
Toil, Envy, Want, the Patron, and the Jail,
See Nations slowly wise, and meanly just,
To buried Merit raise the tardy Bust.
If Dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear *Lydiat's* Life, and *Galileo's* End.

(*The Vanity of Human Wishes*)

Citing Charles XII of Sweden as an example of military glory, Johnson thus moralises on his tragic end—

He left the name at which the world grew pale
To point a moral or adorn a tale.

Such being the human condition, what is left to man for support? Johnson's answer is religious faith and prayer—

Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to heaven the measure and the choice.
Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.

Goldsmith (1728-74). Goldsmith's position as a poet is, in many respects, analogous to Johnson's with this important difference that he had more genuine poetry in him than the learned doctor. Few may have heard of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* but almost everybody knows the *Deserted Village*. This and *The Traveller* are the foundation of Goldsmith's fame as a poet. Of his miscellaneous

poems, the 'Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog', 'When lovely woman stoops to folly' and *Retaliation* are also well known.

The Traveller (1764) records the author's impressions of his travels through France, Switzerland, and Italy together with agreeable philosophical reflections on the gifts which nature has bestowed on different countries to keep the balance straight. The *Deserted Village* (1770) is an idealised description of the Irish village where Goldsmith passed his childhood—its natural beauties, its genial villagers, its pious parson and its know-all schoolmaster. The poet laments that all this is no more. The village is now deserted, the inhabitants having been driven away to towns or colonies by the advent of the large estate holdings and their enclosures of land formerly occupied by the peasantry. The poem is sentimental in the best sense of that term and is as appealing today as it was when it first appeared. Its modern relevance is illustrated by the oft-quoted lines—

Ill fare the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay;
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

Goldsmith like Johnson, wrote his poems within the framework of the classical school but their spirit is of a different world. By infusing them with nature, feeling and humour he gave them a freshness and charm which was alien to the run-of-the-mill verse of the 18th century. Besides, the naturalness, the simplicity, and the sweetness of his style and diction, and the exquisite finish of his verse, add up to poetic achievement of the highest order. *The Traveller* and the *Deserted Village* are among the last great works of the classical school and not below the greatest.

Retaliation, a fragmentary poem published in 1774, consists of a number of humorous epitaphs on Garrick, Burke, Reynolds and other friends (except Johnson) by way of retort to similar verses written by them to ridicule Goldsmith. The most famous of the latter is Garrick's—

Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness call'd Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll.

Here is the surprising conclusion of the 'Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog'—

The man recovered of the bite,
The dog it was that dy'd.

It is to be noted that both *Elegy* and the song 'When a lovely woman stoops to folly' occur in *The Vicar of Wakefield*—

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
 And finds too late that men betray,
 What charm can sooth her melancholy,
 What art can wash her guilt away?
 The only art her guilt to cover,
 To hide her shame from every eye,
 To give repentance to her lover,
 And wring his bosom—is to die.

The Parson of the *Deserted Village* is summed up in the well-known couplet—

Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,
 And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.

'The Village Schoolmaster', however, is too good to be abridged and must be given in full.

The Village Schoolmaster

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
 With blossomed furze unprofitably gay,
 There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
 The village master taught his little school;
 A man severe he was, and stern to view,
 I knew him well, and every truant knew;
 Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning face;
 Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee,
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;
 Full well the busy whisper circling round,
 Conveyed the dismal tidings when he frowned;
 Yet he was kind, or if severe in aught,
 The love he bore to learning was in fault;
 The village all declared how much he knew,
 'Twas certain he could write, and cypher too;
 Land he could measure, terms and tides presage,
 And even the story ran that he could gauge.
 In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,
 For even tho' vanquished, he could argue still;
 While words of learned length, and thundering sound,
 Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
 That one small head could carry all he knew.

(*The Deserted Village*)

CHAPTER 26

THE HERALDS OF THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

Cowper—His great poem *The Task*—His shorter and popular poems—He was no innovator but a mixture of the old and the new—Crabbe—His greatest poem *The Village*—His other poems—His humanitarianism links him with Wordsworth, but he excels only in pessimistic realism—Blake—His *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*—He escaped completely from the 18th century—Burns—His works: *Poems in the Scottish Dialect* and *Songs*—His lyric genius and his historical importance—Minor poetry: *Rolliad* and *Lousiad*.

It was shown in the previous chapter how opposition to Pope's school of poetry had been more or less steadily growing and how a revised interest in Nature and in the romantic past had marked this opposition. Dr Johnson's forceful personality held the new tendencies in check for the time, but signs of the change became more and more pronounced as the century advanced to its close. In the last quarter of the century, four poets, each in his own way, heralded the opening of the second romantic age in English literature. These were Cowper, Crabbe, Blake and Burns.

William Cowper (*pron.* Cooper, 1731-1800), one of the most lovable of English poets, came of a good aristocratic family, was educated at Westminster school whence he went to study law and was called to the Bar. His family influence was great, but his prospects in Government service were marred by constitutional morbidity which developed into suicidal mania. Though a couple of years in a lunatic asylum cured him, the blight of melancholy hovered over him all his life. He had to leave London and retired into the country where he passed the rest of his life in the care and company of friends, the most devoted of whom, Mrs Mary Unwin, the widow of a clergyman, he celebrated in the sentimental verses 'To Mary'. It was at her suggestion that he wrote the eight satires—*Table-talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation* and *Retirement*—all in heroic couplets, which together with some shorter poems appeared in 1782. The shorter poems of this volume included the well known *Boadicea* and *Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk*. Another woman, Lady Austen, suggested the 'sofa' in his room as the subject for his next work by way of diversion for the

melancholy poet, and the result was *The Task* in blank verse, one of the most companionable of poems in the English language. The same lady told him the story of the London linen-draper immortalised in the ballad of *John Gilpin*. The volume containing these two as well as *Tirocinium*, a forceful attack on public schools of the day, appeared in 1785. After this date he produced a translation of Homer, which is dull though dignified, and a number of shorter poems which appeared after his death. These include the famous *On the Loss of the Royal George*, and *To Mary*. His last poem *The Castaway*, a cry of utter despair was written shortly before his death. Later editions of his poems contained the tender *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*. He got a pension of £300 in 1794. His close association with Mary Unwin came to an end with her death in 1796. Thereafter the poet lingered in physical and mental misery from which he was released by death in 1800.

Every schoolboy essay on country life contains Cowper's line from *The Task*: "God made the country and man made the town." Cowper comes nearer to Wordsworth even than Thomson in his love of Nature, but he weaves no theory or religion about it. He expresses his simple gratitude for the healing influence of Nature on his troubled spirit—

The tide of life, swift always in its course,
May run in cities with a brisker force,
But nowhere with a current so serene,
Or half so clear, as in the rural scene.

(*Retirement*)

Cowper, a Calvinist, was deeply religious in the true sense as is shown by his generous sympathies with the meanest of God's creatures.

I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.

I would not have a slave to till my ground,
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth
That sinews bought and sold have ever earn'd.

(*The Task*)

Cowper's concern for India—India that had been trampled by Warren Hastings and other empire builders—is touchingly shown in these lines—

Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace,
Or do we grind her still?

(*The Task*)

Cowper's satires are a far cry from Pope's. In fact they are so many didactic poems containing gentle admonitions not unmixed

with playful humour and occasional wit—

The solemn fop; significant and budge;
A fool with judges, amongst fools a judge.
His wit invites you by his looks to come.
But when you knock, it never is at home,

(*Conversation*)

How much a dunce that has been sent to roam
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home.

(*The Progress of Error*)

Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is mind distress'd.

(*Retirement*)

He was too gentle for satire. It is in *The Task* that the real poetic quality of Cowper is shown to the best advantage. He is, however, best known by his shorter poems which are familiar to us in school anthologies. They are the instinctive and spontaneous effusions of a real poet. Their simplicity, naturalness and easy grace constitute their perennial charm. Only those who have never known a mother's affection can charge Cowper with sentimentality in the poem on his mother's picture. The charge may be justified to some extent in regard to the poem on Mary, but even here it must be remembered that Cowper and Mary were at one time engaged to be married and that the union was prevented only by the recurrence of the poet's malady. In fact, the sad circumstances of the poet's life should always be remembered in judging his works.

Historically Cowper was no innovator or revolutionary in poetry. Though it was he who said that Pope

Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And every warbler has his tune by heart.

yet he did not disdain to write in couplets, however rugged and enjambed he deliberately made them. Even his style which is simpler and more natural than that of Pope and his school is not entirely free from its generalising tendency and set poetic diction. It is only in regard to his love of the country and his humanitarianism that he can be said to be looking forward to the romantics. Odd mixture of old and new as he was, he inclined, on the whole, rather to the old than to the new. Judged by bulk, range, and poetic quality Cowper belongs to the great English poets of the second order.

George Crabbe (1754-1832) was in form and style of the school of Pope, and though in spirit and substance too, predominantly satiric and didactic, he differed from that school in the greater humanity of his subject. He took the bold step of identifying himself with the poorer classes and describing their life realistically. He showed a pronounced individuality of character by setting himself squarely against the tradition, dear to the writers of pastorals, of painting romantic and idealised pictures of village life. According to him the happiness and innocence of the villagers such as that described by

Goldsmith more recently in his *Deserted Village* was romantic fiction and travesty of truth.

Son of an exciseman, he was born at Aldborough in Suffolk on the bleak east coast of England, was apprenticed to a surgeon, practised medicine for a time and finally went to London to seek his fortune in literature. There he met with disappointment and endured dire poverty. When almost destitute he sought and obtained the patronage of Burke and Lord Thurlow. He took orders and passed the rest of his life in ease and comfort, serving as minister first in his own parish and then at other places.

His first poem, *The Library*, is dull and unimportant, full as it is of trite reflections on books and reading; such for example, as that old and weighty authors are no longer read, that fashion rules even the wisest, that our nicer age prefers light and frivolous reading, etc.

It was his second poem, *The Village* (1783), corrected and revised by Johnson, which made his name and fixed his character as a poet. Having seen the hard life of villagers with his own eyes, he describes their poverty and misery, their struggles and squalor and vice in minute details. Protesting against the falsehood of romantic fancy, he pleads for truth in poetry—

Truth in Poetry

No; cast by Fortune on a frowning coast,
Which neither groves nor happy valley boast;
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
And other Shepherds dwell with other mates;
By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,
As truth will paint it and as bards will not.
Nor you, ye Poor, of Letter'd scorn complain,
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain;
O'ercome by labour and bow'd down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
Can Poets smooth you, when you pine for bread,
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toil come hour?

(From *The Village*)

After twenty years' silence appeared *The Parish Register* in which he reviews the life of his parish during the whole year. This was followed by *The Borough* descriptive of the life of a country town. The last to be published in his life-time were *Tales in Verse* and *Tales of the Hall* in which he included people of the upper classes. The *Tales* show him a competent narrator, recalling Chaucer, though he has neither Chaucer's humanity nor humour. The tone, indeed, of his later works, was softened to some extent, but his pessimism persisted to the last.

Either by temperament or because of the sufferings of his youth, Crabbe dwelt on the seamy side of life. Byron's description of him as 'Nature's sternest painter, yet the best' is, on the whole, not unjust. He excels only when he is describing life or natural scenes in their

harsh aspects. Though anti-romantic by temperament, he links himself with Wordsworth and other romantics by his sympathy with the rustics and by his interest in nature. He does not, like Wordsworth, glorify the villagers, or praise nature. He was a man of his century in using nature only as a background for scenes of life and character.

In manner too he was of the 18th century. He wrote in the couplet of Pope, but his couplets are neither elegant nor melodious.

Here and there we may come across a quibble or epigrammatic point, but by and large the verse is pedestrian. In fact Crabbe is the most mediocre of the poets of his class. Neither by his matter nor by his manner does he offer any refreshment to the human spirit. His pessimistic inspiration could not transfigure his subject. All of us have our share of sorrows, but we do not go to poetry just to add to that burden. It is only when poetry transfigures the ills of life that they become bearable. Crabbe and other so-called realists may call it poetic illusion, but what else is life itself if not illusion. We are such stuff as dreams are made on. . .

The following extract illustrates how the inmates of the parish poor-house are treated by the parish doctor.

The Parish Poor-house

But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof, and echoes round the walls;
Anon, a Figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit;
With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go;
He bids the gazing throng around him fly,
And carries Fate and Physic in his eye;
A potent Quack, long vers'd in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills;
Whose murd'rous hand a drowsy Bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.

Paid by the Parish for attendance here,
He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;
In haste he seeks the bed where Misery lies,
Impatience mark'd in his averted eyes;
And, some habitual queries hurried o'er,
Without reply, he rushes on the door;
His drooping Patient, long inur'd to pain,
And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain;
He ceases now the feeble help to crave
Of Man; and silent sinks into the grave.

(From *The Village*)

(**William Blake** (1757-1827), the third of this group, was a fanatical revolutionary in poetry. He went far beyond the most determined of the romantics in his worship of imagination and repudiation of logic, science, and reason. Neither in matter nor in manner is there anything of the eighteenth century in Blake's poetry. He was an eccentric and from all accounts was never wholly sane.

Londoner by birth he was the son of an Irish hosier, and a painter

and engraver by profession. He had little schooling and while yet a child saw mystic visions such, for example, as 'God peeping through the window', 'Angels in a Tree', and 'Ezekiel sitting under a green bough'.

Blake's poetry was never published in the ordinary sense, but appeared as commentary for his engravings. Only his earlier poetry is of interest to the average reader, for his later poetry, devoted to prophetic visions, is so obscure as to turn away the most determined enthusiast. Though basically a Christian, he had developed a religion of his own with a special mythology for symbolism. This, complicated in itself, was further complicated by incoherent expression. Blake's education had been inadequate and was not equal to the demands of symbolism. Such glimpses as one can get of his meaning tend to show that he was fanatically opposed to all authority or restrictive codes. Beyond this it is neither possible nor necessary to follow him. Luckily his earlier poetry is the very reverse of obscure. It is simple, direct, and charmingly musical. It consists of short songs or lyrics and is contained in three little volumes: *Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), and *Songs of Experience* (1794). All these poems are the products of genuine inspiration. They are the spontaneous utterances of the poet's heart and he who is not touched by them must indeed be over-sophisticated or dull of soul. Written in short rhyming lines and regular stanzas, they charm the ear by their fairy music.

The *Poetical Sketches* are little pictures or songs in the manner of the Renaissance poets. The *Songs of Innocence* sing of childhood and express through the mouths of babes and sucklings Blake's own feelings of tenderness and piety, beauty and joy of the world. They are in the nature of lullabys or nursery rhymes rather than philosophic poems of childhood such as those of Isaac Watts or Wordsworth. Childhood speaks through Blake as it has spoken through no other poet. The *Songs of Experience* are the counterparts of the *Songs of Innocence*, reflecting as they do the contrasted mood brought on by bitter experience. The divine grace and goodness of the *Songs of Innocence* gives place to the disenchanting picture of the evil of the world. The French Revolution had opened Blake's eyes to the tyranny that stalked the world. The famous song 'Tiger, tiger, burning bright' is included in this collection. As the lamb was the symbol of innocence, so the tiger is now the symbol of tyranny.

In form as in thought Blake was in complete revolt against the conventions of the 18th century. He avoided the couplet altogether. He obeyed no rules, followed no set patterns either in his songs or in his mystical works. Though a great admirer of Milton, he wrote his prophetic poems not in Miltonic blank verse but in a special blank verse of his own which is hardly distinguishable from rhythmical prose.

Though he escaped from the eighteenth century completely and was the greatest anticipator of the Romantic Revival, Blake can hardly be said to have exercised any influence on his contemporaries.

He was derided as an eccentric and insane. It was only later that he was recognised as a mystic visionary. Like a mad man he lived in a world of his own, that of imagination and mystery. To him the unseen, the unreal alone was real. Wordsworth said the right thing about him in his remark that the madness of Blake interests us more than the sanity of other men.

The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee?
 Dost thou know who made thee?
 Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
 By the stream and o'er the mead;
 Gave thee clothing of delight,
 Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
 Gave thee such a tender voice,
 Making all the vales rejoice?
 Little Lamb, who made thee?
 Dost thou know who made thee?
 Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
 Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
 He is called by thy name,
 For he calls himself a Lamb.
 He is meek, and he is mild;
 He became a little child.
 I a child, and thou a lamb,
 We are called by his name.
 Little Lamb, God bless thee!
 Little Lamb, God bless thee!

(Songs of Innocence)

The Clod and the Pebble

Love seeketh not itself to please,
 Nor for itself hath any care,
 But for another gives its ease,
 And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.
 So sung a little clod of Clay,
 Trodden with the cattle's feet,
 But a Pebble of the brook
 Warbled out these metres meet.
 Love seeketh only Self to please,
 To bind another to its delight,
 Joys in another's loss of ease,
 And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

(Songs of Experience)

Robert Burns (1759-1796), the last and greatest of this group was a Scot, and though neither a conscious innovator nor a revolutionary, made as complete a break with the 18th century as Blake. Though he had great respect for Pope and produced some English poetry in the artificial manner, the fact of his writing mainly in Scottish dialect, phrase, and metres—all so distinct from English—separated him entirely from the stream of 18th century tradition. He was, like Blake, a born poet, but with a gift of poetry far more comprehensive, various, intense and human, which has given him a place among the great poets of the world. Though unique in some ways, Blake could at least be classed, if not compared, with other mystics in English

poetry—Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, Wordsworth. Burns is unique in the real sense of the word, and can neither be classed nor compared with any poets of equal power.

Born at Alloway in Ayrshire, he was elder of the two sons of a poor farmer of Calvinistic faith. He had intermittent but fairly good education, and the notion that he was an illiterate peasant is a myth. Quite early he developed a taste for literature as well as wine and women. He followed the family calling of farming, but didn't prosper. After the death of his father in 1784 came the crisis of his life. Unable to stave off poverty and with love-troubles on hand, he decided to emigrate to Jamaica. From taking this desperate step he was saved by the success of his *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* published at Kilamarnock, (1786). Copies of this edition are now worth several thousand pounds each. At one bound Burns became a national hero. A second edition containing some additional poems was published at Edinburgh in 1787. His financial position thus improved, he married Jean Armour, the most permanent of his loves, took a farm, settled at Ellisland in Dumfriesshire, and obtained a post in the Excise, which after the failure of his farm, became his chief support. He now wrote only a few more poems, notably 'Tam O' Shanter' and 'The Jolly Beggars', devoting himself to the composition of songs which he contributed to magazines and various collections of songs like *The Scots Musical Museum* and *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice*. His poems had made him famous; his songs made him immortal. His addiction to drink had undermined his health and he died in 1796 at the age of 37.

In religion and politics he was a liberal. He had quite early forsaken the strict Calvinistic faith which for him meant only hypocrisy and tyranny. He sympathised with the Revolutionists in the early stages of the French Revolution and incurred the wrath of the government and the aristocracy. When, however, he saw through the aims of France which threatened invasion, his patriotic spirit rose and his patriotic songs echoed through the country. He enlisted as a volunteer in the Dumfries militia and was buried with military honours.

In the plethora of criticism that has been produced on Burns, the real quality of his genius is apt to be confused. Let it, therefore, be understood right at the start that his genius was essentially lyrical. It is chiefly by his songs that he is known and admired the world over. The second quality of his genius is his riotous good humour. This is best shown in his famous poems 'Tam O' Shanter', 'The Jolly Beggars' and 'Holy Willie's Prayer'. Burns is one of the great humorists of the world. Those who have only read or heard of his immorality would hardly think of him as a moralist, and yet he is a moralist too in a modest way. He made no secret of his moral delinquencies. His poetry is intensely personal and is full of self-revelations. His transgressions filled him with remorse. Any apparent condonation of sin, such for instance as suggested in 'The Rigs of Barley' or 'The Jolly Beggars' must be read in the light of 'The Bard's

Epitaph' which concludes with this advice: "Know, prudent, cautious, self controul is Wisdom's root." He knew what was good in principle, but, alas, like most mortals, was unable to live up to his knowledge. The 'Epistle to Dr Blacklock' concludes with these lines—

But to conclude my silly rhyme
 (I'm scant o'verse, and scant o'time)
 To make a happy fire-side clime
 To weans and wife (children)
 That's the true pathos and sublime
 of human life.

That he lived up to this ideal was the testimony of his widow, and the same lesson is enforced in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. It is a commonplace of criticism that Burns's strength lies in his portrayal of Scottish life and character. That he was able to give artistic expression to the cherished thoughts, feelings and aspirations of a whole people was no mean achievement. There had been no great poet in Scotland since Dunbar. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been practically barren. The rigour of the Scottish Kirk which discouraged secular literature in favour of that of the good life may perhaps partly account for this. But the Scottish folk-songs were not killed, and in the 18th century some aristocratic families attempted from patriotic motives to revive vernacular poetry. Apart from minors, the work of only two poets, Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, can be said to have some intrinsic worth. The pioneering work of Ramsay through his collections as well as by his own contributions has already been noticed. The ill-fated Fergusson (1750-74) who died mad at the age of 24 had the makings of a genuine poet as shown in his odes 'To the Bee' and 'To the Gowdspink' (goldfinch) and in 'The Farmer's Ingle', a delightful picture of a winter evening at the fireside. Burns acknowledged Fergusson as his master. 'The Farmer's Ingle' may have suggested to him 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'.

Burns thus had before him the capital of a rich national heritage in a floating mass of poems, folk-songs and ballads. He was fired with the ambition to celebrate his country in song as Blind Harry had done in his *Wallace*. He brought to bear on his work a poetic gift of the highest order and produced, in his comparatively short life, poems which fixed the character of Scottish poetry as distinguished from English.

His speciality having been discussed, a few general characteristics of his poetry may now be noticed. The more obvious of these are a feeling for nature, humour, and above all, humanity. A feeling for nature has always been a strong point with the Scottish poets and Burns is no exception. His careful observation and delicate appreciation of natural scenes, may be seen in 'Thou Lingering Star', 'The Banks of Doon', 'To a Mouse', 'To a Mountain Daisy' and so many others. His outstanding triumphs in humour in 'Tam O'Shanter', 'The Jolly Beggars' and 'Holy Willie's Prayer' have already been

mentioned. To these may be added the milder satirical piece 'The Address to the Unco Guid'. Burns was not a satirist properly so called, but he had the satiric vein which is best exhibited in that matchless serio comic piece, 'Holy Willies's Prayer'. Burns's humour is good-natured and is, on that account, more effective in this poem, which is an attack on hypocritical religion and self-righteousness. The most important characteristic of Burns's poetry, however, is his wide-ranging humanity. He sympathises not only with all humanity but with all living creatures. He has pity for the mouse whom he has rendered homeless and the tiny daisy he has inadvertently uprooted with his plough. He has nothing but kindness and understanding for reprobates, be they jolly beggars or other human derelicts. He had experienced life to the full and communicated his experiences, both physical and mental, with unabashed frankness and sincerity. His joys and sorrows, hopes and despairs, raptures and heart-aches, scorn of cant and humbug, hatred of tyranny and oppression, feeling of brotherhood of man, pricks of conscience, reverence for God—in these we find reflected the feelings of our common humanity.

Burns's style, like Burns the man, is perfectly plain. But this style he acquired with great pains and patience. He did not, like Pope, boast of lisping 'in numbers, for the numbers came'. In his fragmentary autobiography he says: "I firmly believe that excellence in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention and pains, . . . I have no great faith in the boastful pretensions to intuitive propriety and laboured elegance. The rough material of fine writing is certainly the gift of genius but I firmly believe that the workmanship is the united effort of pains, attention and repeated trial".

Mathew Arnold denied Burns a place in the front rank of poets on the ground of his excessive devotion to "Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manners". This narrow judgment has been rightly over-ruled by the literary world at large. His Scottish bias didn't prevent him from rising to the universal in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', 'The Bard's Epitaph', 'Address to the Unco Guid' and many other poems. In the words of Saintsbury this Scottish bias 'touches the accidents rather than the essentials of poetry and of literature generally, and does not affect either his positive excellence or his unique historical importance'. Besides, great as the contribution of his poems was in crystallising the spirit and defining the form of Scottish poetry, the contribution of his songs was even greater. The song is not subject to the limitations of language or dialect and appeals to all men. 'What will a child learn sooner than a song?' asks the Bible. Several European countries, notably Germany, have set the songs of Burns to music regardless of their language. Apart from their positive excellence, the songs of Burns have great historical importance. The lyrical muse had been silent since the Cavalier lyrists, and the lyric it was that was most needed to freshen up the springs of poetry in the 18th century. Indeed, the songs and lyrics of Burns must have sounded like a knell to the poetry of Pope and like a mating call to that of the Romantics. So, despite his 'Scotch drink,

Scotch religion and Scotch manners', Burns remains the greatest poet of Scotland and among the greatest poets of England.

Tam O'Shanter

Tam, a farmer, is returning home around midnight, after a bout of drinking with a boon companion. On seeing the Alloway Kirk (church) lighted up he looks in and sees wizards and witches dancing to the tune of bag pipes played by Old Nick (The Devil). Among the old hags he is fascinated by a pretty girl in short skirts and shouts 'Well done, Cutty Sark!' (short skirt). At once the lights go out and the witches rush out, like a swarm of bees, to attack him. Tam spurs his mare Meg and crosses the bridge over the river Doon but not before the 'Cutty Sark' has pulled off Meg's tail. (The witches, it was believed, could not cross a bridge).

Epistle to Davie, A Brother Poet

It's no in titles nor in rank;
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
 To purchase peace and rest;
 It's no in makin' muckle *mair*:
 It's no in books; it's no in lear,
 To make us truly blest;
 If Happiness hae not her seat
 And centre in the breast,
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,
 But never can be blest;
 Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
 Could make us happy lang;
 The *heart* ay's the part ay,
 That makes us right or wrong.

Address to the Unco Guid or The Rigidly Righteous

Ye high, exalted, virtuous Dames,
 Ty'd up in godly laces,
 Before ye gie poor *Frailty* names
 Suppose a change o'cases;
 A dear-lov'd lad, convenience snug,
 A treacherous inclination—
 But, let me whisper i' your lug,
 Ye're aiblins nae temptation

A man's a man for a 'that

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
 The man's the gowd for a 'that. (gold)
 What tho' on ham-eiy fare we dine, (homely)
 Wear hoddin-gray, and a 'that? (coarse woollens)
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A man's a man for a 'that.
 For a 'that, and a 'that
 Their tinsel show, and a 'that,
 The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
 Is king o'men for a 'that.

From 'Green grow the Rashes, O' (the first and the last stanzas)—

Green grow the rashes O,
 Green grow the rashes O;

The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent among the lasses O!

Auld nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes O;
Her prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses O.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the above examples, the difference between the Scottish dialect and English is not so great as to render Burns's poetry unintelligible to the English-knowing reader. The more unfamiliar words and phrases are usually explained in footnotes in the collected editions as well as anthologies.

Minor Poets

With the exception of some brilliant satires the minor poetry of the last years of the century is worthless and is hardly worth detailed notice. Erasmus Darwin, grand-father of the great Charles, wrote *The Botanic Garden* which has the interest of the fantastic in that he clothed the dry facts of science in the most elaborate 'poetic diction'. This provoked the equally fantastic but witty parody *The Loves of the Triangles* by the *Anti-Jacobin*. Poetry reached its lowest ebb in 'The Della Cruscans', a silly school of poets founded towards the end of the century and named after the 'Academia della Crusca' of Florence which had been established in the 16th century with the object of purifying the Italian language. Hence its name which signifies chaff or bran that was to be separated from the grain. Its symbol was accordingly a sieve. The absurd sentimentalities and stilted affectations of style which characterised the English Della Cruscans were ridiculed by Gifford in his satires *Baviad* and *Maeviad*. (Bavius and Maevius, insignificant poetasters of Rome, were satirised by Virgil).

In the literary battles between the two political parties, the Whigs produced two famous satires—*The Rolliad* (1784-85) written by several hands, and *The Lousiad* (1785) written by John Wolcott or 'Peter Pindar'. *The Rolliad* is a series of satires on Pitt and the Tory party. *The Lousiad* is a satire on the personal habits of George III who discovering a louse in his bed ordered all his domestic servants to have their heads shaved. Wolcott was an able but unscrupulous journalist who attained great popularity by his extremely witty and vitriolic attacks in his 'Odes' and 'Epistles', etc. on George III, Pitt, Paine, Johnson, Boswell and other notable personalities of the day. In a critique on his bombastic style Dr Johnson is described as one who

Uplifts the club of Hercules—for what?
To crush a butterfly or brain a gnat.

On the Tory side Wolcott found his match in William Gifford (1756-1826) editor of the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797-98), a weekly paper

started by the Tories to ridicule the reformers and political agitators of the times. His satire on Wolcott, *Epistle to Peter Pindar*, provoked him to a personal assault on Gifford. The *Anti-Jacobin* lasted a little over a year, and Gifford later became the first editor of *The Quarterly Review* founded by Sir Walter Scott, Southey, and others as a rival to *The Edinburgh Review*. He was a fanatical hater of all reformers and opponents of the government and became notorious for his highly prejudiced criticisms of the romantics. His ferocious article on *Endymion* is said to have hastened Keats's death.

CHAPTER 27

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NOVEL

The ancestry of the Novel—The first great novelists: Richardson, Fielding, Smollet, Sterne—Johnson's *Rasselas*—Burney's *Evelina*—Mrs Radcliffe—Lewis—Beckford—Godwin.

In tracing the ancestry of the Novel one could go back to the first attempts at prose fiction in the age of Elizabeth such as Lyly's *Euphuus*, the euphuistic romances of Lodge and Greene, Nash's *Jack Wilton*, Sidney's *Arcadia* and Deloney's *Gentle Craft*. In the 17th century, one could point to its links with the 'Character' writers, the French heroic romances and the novels of Mrs Aphra Behn. Its affinities with Bunyan and Defoe—if not with Swift—are obvious, even if neither is accepted as its originator. In the immediate background, however, and by far the most important stage in the development of the Novel was the character-sketches such as that of Roger de Coverley by Addison and Steele. The narratives of Bunyan, Defoe, and Swift are denied the title of novel because they are lacking in character interest. They are only long tales in prose or romances. Orthodox criticism makes a distinction between novel and romance. The chief interest of romance is in extraordinary incidents, that of novel in character. A Novel properly so called is thus a long tale portraying characters and incidents of real life. The Novel in this generally accepted sense was created and established in the middle years of the 18th century by a group of four writers: Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. In them are found all the elements which, singly or in combination, have been the staple of the Novel down to our own day.

✓ **Samuel Richardson** (1689-1761). The transition from Bunyan, Defoe, and Swift, from extraordinary and incredible adventures to those in a social milieu, conjoined to delineation of character and manners, was exhibited for the first time in Richardson's *Pamela* published in 1740. Richardson, a fat and prosperous printer, was an expert letter-writer who used to help illiterate people, specially of the fair sex, by writing their love-letters. He was commissioned to produce a Letter-Writer containing model letters for all occasions.

It was in the course of this work that the plot of *Pamela* occurred to him. The story is told in a series of letters written by Pamela Andrews, a young maidservant in the service of an aristocratic lady. The mistress has just died when the story opens. Her son Mr B. taking unfair advantage of her position attempts first to seduce and then to rape her. She repels his advances and defends her virtue. Tired of pursuit and being very much in love with her, he offers marriage and is accepted, for Pamela has all along been secretly attracted to the squire, though resisting his attempts on her honour.

Richardson's aim was undoubtedly moral. The full title of the novel is *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*. The perfect combination of virtue and prudence in the heroine wins her a lover and an aristocratic status. Richardson's cultural level was not very high and his narrow notion of virtue provoked several skits. Perhaps realising this, he attempted a higher flight in his second novel *Clarissa*, which appeared in eight volumes in 1748. This too is in the form of letters, written by Clarissa to her friend Anna Howe and by Lovelace to his friend John Belford. Clarissa is very elaborately and convincingly portrayed as the very pink of womanly perfection—beautiful, rich, accomplished and virtuous. She is courted by Lovelace, a young, handsome, but unscrupulous rake. She returns his love, but her family oppose the match because of his reputation. They press her to marry the ugly and stupid Mr Solmes whom she detests. She is ultimately carried off by Lovelace and raped. She refuses to marry the now repentant Lovelace and dies of shame. Lovelace is killed in a duel by her cousin Morden. The lesson intended in this novel is that while children must obey their parents, the parents must not force them into marriage against their wishes.

Clarissa is undoubtedly Richardson's masterpiece. The tragedy of the saintly heroine plunged England and Europe in a flood of tears. It was translated into French, Dutch and German. Having presented the ideal of woman in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, Richardson proceeded to portray his ideal of a gentleman in *Sir Charles Grandison* published in seven volumes in 1754. It is also in the form of letters. Though not dull, it is the least interesting of the three novels. The hero has everything a man could desire—good looks, wealth, virtue, prudence, tact, wisdom. Such perfection makes him unconvincing. Clarissa too is a perfect being, but her perfection is relieved by her imprudence (in trusting herself with Lovelace); conflicts and sufferings. Sir Charles's only conflict is in his choice between two women, Harriet Byron and the Italian Clemenina, which too is resolved for him by the ultimate refusal of the latter to marry a Protestant. Quite apart from this lack of moral conflict, Richardson was dealing with the uppermost class with which he was not quite familiar.

Richardson had considerable influence on subsequent novelists both in England and in Europe. The letter technique afforded him unlimited scope for analysis of character and motive—a feature which anticipated the modern psychological novel and the stream of consciousness school. Richardson's excessive analysis is boring and he

has no sense of humour, but the greatest deterrent to modern readers is the inordinate length of his novels. His plots are deftly manipulated and his characters are sharply drawn. He had a keen and sympathetic understanding of the feminine character and his women, specially the heroines, are superb. His skill in portraying sentiment and feeling is specially remarkable and this was his chief recommendation in the 18th century. His language and style are ordinary, colloquial, direct and unaffected.

✓ **Henry Fielding** (1707-54), the greatest novelist of the 18th century, was of a high family but without fortune. He took to novel-writing after a career as dramatist, journalist, and lawyer. He was also in later life a magistrate. Provoked to write a parody of *Pamela* he soon found the story developing into an independent novel, dropped the satire and the result was *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of His Friend Abraham Adams*, written in imitation of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*.)

The story begins on lines parallel to those of *Pamela*. Joseph Andrews, the brother of Pamela Andrews, is employed as a servant in the family of Sir Thomas Booby. He is dismissed from service because he has repulsed Lady Booby's attempts to seduce him. He takes to the road for the village where his sweetheart Fanny lives. He is beaten up and stripped by robbers, is taken by a compassionate coach driver to an inn where he meets Abraham Adams, the simple, good-hearted and quixotic priest in the Booby family. From now on Joseph sinks into the background and Adams is the real hero. They travel together, meet rogues and vagabonds of all kinds and have many ridiculous adventures—the most notable being Adam's rough reception at the house of the boorish parson Trulliber. They reach Lady Booby's country house where all the principal characters are brought together. Joseph is rescued from Lady Booby's persecutions by the young Squire Booby, now married to Pamela. The surprising part of the denouement comes with the discovery that Joseph is not the brother of Pamela but the son of rich and respectable parents. The novel ends happily with his marriage to Fanny.

The novel is conceived in the true spirit of comedy. The author called it a comic epic in prose. Fielding's purpose was to expose affectation, vanity, and hypocrisy and as a corollary to show that their opposite, namely, true virtue, consists in goodness of the heart rather than in good reputation or conventional respectability. It was in this view of supreme virtue that his moral code differed from Richardson's. Parson Adams is one of the great characters of English literature, but besides him there is a whole crowd of characters who though typical are taken direct from the life. Unlike Richardson, Fielding did not care for minute psychological analysis; he achieved life-likeness of characters and actions by ironical humour. Also his adoption of the straightforward method of the third person narrative after the manner of Cervantes gave him a wider and freer scope for such presentation. Further, this presentation gains in colour and variety from the picaresque elements—the adventures on the road

journey—introduced into the story.

Fielding's next novel was the *History of the Late Mr Jonathan Wild the Great* (1743). The novel was based on a notorious bandit who had been hanged some years earlier. This is a satire on the popular ideas of greatness. Fielding shows that the greatness of persons who occupy high positions in government, politics, and society is in no way different from the greatness of Jonathan Wild and his associates. The so-called great men profess high ideals but their actions are as cruel, selfish, and mean as those of the basest criminals. The severe irony of this book, reminiscent almost of Swift, was meant to shock the readers into an awareness of the great difference between goodness and greatness. The characters are as vital as those of *Joseph Andrews*, though naturally less pleasing.

Tom Jones (1749). Fielding's third novel, is his masterpiece. The full title is *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. Tom is found one night in the bed of the benevolent Squire Allworthy who brings him up along with his nephew Blifil. Tom falls in love with the beautiful and virtuous Sophia, daughter of the peevish and overbearing fox hunting Squire Western, who wants to marry her to Blifil. The open-hearted and generous Tom falls an easy prey, through his indiscretions, to the machinations of Blifil and is banished by Allworthy. Tom takes to the road accompanied by Partridge, a simple-minded schoolmaster, and meets with many adventures, some of them sexual, notably that with Lady Bellaston who falls in love with him and keeps him in London at her own expense. At the other end, Sophia who loves Tom, runs away from home to escape from marriage with the mean scoundrel Blifil, and finds shelter with a cousin in London. An attempt by Lady Bellaston to prostitute her with a lord is foiled by the arrival of Squire Western in search of her. Tom is discovered to be the illegitimate half-brother of Blifil, that is to say, the son of Allworthy's sister, and like Blifil Allworthy's own nephew. Blifil's villainies are exposed, Tom gets his Sophia, the latter forgiving his irregular love-affairs.

Tom Jones, like Fielding's two previous novels, has its picaresque elements—the major part of the action takes place on the road—but like *Joseph Andrews* it is essentially comic in conception, the main difference being its larger canvas for the working out of the human comedy. It is thus in a fuller sense a comic epic in prose. It is filled with a larger crowd of characters of all sorts and conditions who play out the comedy with boisterous humour. The characterisation is masterly without any parade of psychology, and Allworthy, Squire Western, Miss Western Sophia (the aunt), Tom, and Lady Bellaston have become classics of English fiction.

Fielding is at some pains to emphasise his moral purpose which is "to recommend goodness and innocence" and "to laugh mankind out of their follies and vices". His further claim, however, that there is nothing in the novel which is 'inconsistent with the strictest rules of decency, nor which can offend even the chastest eye in the perusal' might seem strange, even shocking, to some readers in view of the

sexual irregularities of the hero. The contradiction is explained by the fact that Fielding knew that the moral philosophy he was preaching was indulgent to the weakness of the flesh. The highest virtue according to him is goodness of the heart. And Tom in spite of his lapses has a heart of gold. He is not ideal, but he is human. It may also be urged on Fielding's behalf that a novel of epic proportions which sets out to present the vast and complex scene of Humanity at large cannot altogether ignore its black spots. The artistic unity of *Tom Jones*, considering its bulk (it consists of 18 books) is astonishing. Its black spots are isolated incidents and do not colour the whole book. A book should be judged by its general drift and total impression. So judged it is as the author intended it to be—sound, wholesome, and human.

A novel feature of *Tom Jones* that needs comment is that each of its 18 books is prefaced with an introductory essay in which the author deals with this or that aspect of his story in a style, which whether mock-heroic or serious, shows him a master of English prose. These digressions may please some readers but are irritating to others. The practice was later followed by Thackeray, George Eliot, and Meredith.

(Fielding's last novel *Amelia* (1751) has less power but not less charm than his previous ones.) The charm centres on the beautiful, virtuous, and gentle heroine Amelia, whose patient sufferings under very trying circumstances are described in a tone of personal tenderness and pathos by a softer and mellower Fielding. Amelia runs away with a penniless and characterless young officer whose only qualifications are good looks and courage. The couple's poverty and Amelia's beauty expose her to the evil designs of many unscrupulous admirers, and her prolonged agony is only ended by the discovery that she is the real heiress to her mother's fortune which has been appropriated by her sister by means of a forged will. She is an ideal wife who forgives her husband's infidelity.

(A good part of the book is devoted to various social evils—defects in the law relating to debtors, scandalous conditions in prisons, etc.—which had come to the author's notice in the course of his duties as a magistrate. Fielding's preoccupation with social abuses has been criticised by some 'arty' critics. They forget how effective literature is in effecting social reforms. The names of Ruskin and Dickens will readily occur to the mind. Several much needed reforms at the end of the 18th century were the direct results of Fielding's literary efforts.)

Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), a Scotsman of good birth and education was trained as a doctor but took to literature as his profession. He joined the British Navy as Surgeon's mate and was in the West Indies for a few years. Leaving the service he returned to London and besides producing a lot of literary hackwork, wrote five novels including the three on which his fame depends: *Roderick Random* (1748), *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *Humphrey Clinker* (1771). He

also wrote a readable though ill-tempered account of his 'Travels in France and Italy' which earned him the title of 'Smelfungus' from Sterne. He was ill-tempered and quarrelsome and quarrelled with almost everybody, but underneath his rough exterior he had a good and generous heart.

The Adventures of Roderick Random, his first notable fiction, is a picaresque novel modelled on *Gil Blas*, the picaresque romance by the French writer Le Sage, which had been published a few years earlier and which was translated later (1749) by Smollett. Much of it is autobiographical, based on his own experiences as a naval surgeon, presented with absurd exaggerations of violence and brutality of life at sea. It is nevertheless interesting as a picture of the British Navy and the British sailor of the 18th century. Roderick, a young Scot, who relates his own story is a mean, heartless, selfish, and unscrupulous adventurer. After the supposed death or disappearance of his father he goes to London to seek his fortune and has many adventures with rogues of all kinds. Pressed as a common sailor in the navy he becomes mate to the Welsh surgeon Morgan, is present at the siege of Cartagena (1741), an episode in the war with Spain, and after a hard and miserable time in the West Indies returns to London. Here he falls in love with Narcissa, but is transported by smugglers to France. Helped with money by his friend Strap, he makes several unsuccessful attempts at making a rich marriage, wastes the money in gambling, and treats Strap most shabbily. Penniless again, he sails as surgeon in a ship commanded by his uncle Tom Bowling, and after varied experiences in different parts of the world finds his father in Paraguay, returns home and marries his sweetheart Narcissa. There is little plot, just a series of episodes held together by the meteoric personality of the 'hero'. The most remarkable of these episodes are, of course, those dealing with the sailors and their awful life at sea. There is no elaboration of character, the only exceptions besides the hero being the jovial Tom Bowling with his nautical language and the Welsh surgeon Morgan with his pedantic volubility, e.g., 'I am a man of some weight and substance, and have kept house and home and paid scot and lot and the king's taxes'. National and professional peculiarities or humours are well displayed by means of comic exaggeration and caricature. The humour is broad, farcical, and coarse, betokening a satirical intention. In spite of its hardness and violence, the book is first class amusement and is historically important as starting the nautical novel (the novel about life at sea) which led the way to the works of such writers as Captain Marryat, Herman Melville, Stevenson and Conrad.

Peregrine Pickle, Smollett's longest novel, has the same general character as *Roderick Random*. If anything, its hero is even more revolting than Roderick. He is a ferocious, headstrong, ungrateful spendthrift and a thorough, reckless libertine. Among his many amorous adventures is one in which he attempts to outrage a girl—his future wife—by drugging her. The chief attraction of the book,

however, is in its humorous characters. The most notable of these is the retired Commodore Trunnion whose house is garrisoned like a fortress or a warship where servants sleep in hammocks and take their turns at watch. He speaks only nautical language and is full of savage but picturesque oaths. The roughness of his speech, however, is only a mask to conceal the kindest of hearts. The insertion in this book of the *Memoirs of a Lady of Quality* was, it is said, due to Smollett's being bribed. The lady of quality was no other than the notorious lady Vane whose profligacy was the talk of the town.

Humphrey Clinker is the best and the most entertaining of Smollett's novels. Written towards the very end of his life and in a relaxed mood in Italy where he was recuperating his health, it is entirely different in tone and temper from his previous novels. For the first time Smollett gives us a genuine comedy conceived in a spirit of genial sympathy. It is still in the picaresque tradition and relates the adventures of a Welsh family travelling through England and Scotland. It is in the form of letters (a compliment to Richardson) which not only reveal the individual characteristics of the correspondents, but also give us a lot of information about the places and people visited.

The party consists of Mr. Mathew Bramble, a grumpy old bachelor who hides behind his rough exterior a heart of gold, his sister Tabitha, a vain and selfish coquet, always on the look-out for a husband, his nephew a buck fresh from Oxford, his pretty niece Lydia, Mrs. Jenkins, Tabitha's maid who, like her mistress, is a specialist in unorthodox spelling, and Humphrey Clinker, a poor lad picked up on the road and servant to Mr. Bramble. They are joined on the way by an eccentric Scottish soldier, Lieut. Lismahago, who is as poor as he is proud and paradoxical. Tabitha falls for him and they are married. Lydia has a love-affair with a good looking young actor who turns out to be a gentleman in disguise. Finally, Humphrey Clinker is discovered to be the illegitimate son of Mr. Bramble and marries Mrs. Jenkins. Beyond this discovery of the identity of Humphrey, there is little plot to speak of—just a series of humorous, sentimental, and romantic episodes. The principal attraction of the book is Mr. Bramble, whose endearing personality is one of the triumphs of humorous characterisation.

Thackeray thought *Humphrey Clinker* to be "the most laughable story that has ever been written since the goodly art of novel writing began." Whether this is so or not may be left to the opinion of every individual reader, but there is no doubt that Tom Bowling, Trunnion, and Bramble are among the great characters of English fiction. Smollett's style is plain and easy, but at times it can be very poetic and eloquent, as for example, in his descriptions of Scottish scenery in *Humphrey Clinker*.

Laurence Sterne (1733-68). There are eccentrics galore in Fielding and Smollett, but the eccentric or fantastic novel *par excellence* was the creation of Sterne. The son of an ensign in the army, and educated at

Cambridge, he was an Anglican clergyman notorious as a philanderer. He made no secret of his love-affair with Mrs. Elizabeth Draper, wife of an employee of the East India Company. This led to his wife's separation from him. He wrote two novels *Tristram Shandy* (1760-67) and *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) the first, full of clowning and the second of sentimentality. The title of his book *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* is itself whimsical, for the book contains very little of the life and nothing of the opinions of Tristram, the titular hero. He gets born only when the book is almost half-way through and is heard of no more. The real hero is his uncle Toby, one of the finest characters of fiction—brave, modest, generous, gentle and simple as a child who would not hurt a fly. He is a retired Captain who was wounded in battle in the wars of Marlborough. His hobby is military science which he studies by reconstructing the campaigns in which he had participated, on his bowling green. His modesty in the love affair with widow Wadman is both amusing and delightful, and his sympathy for Lt. Le Fevre when the latter is on his deathbed is most affecting. According to Hazlitt, "the character of uncle Toby is the finest compliment ever paid to human nature." Corporal Trim, the simple, faithful, and devoted servant and companion of Toby is equally memorable.

The 'opinions' in the title are those of Tristram's father Walter Shandy, perhaps the most whimsical character in all literature. He is a pedant and is full of wild, quixotic schemes and notions. He believes in long noses and auspicious names. Ironically Tristram's nose is crushed and his name which was to be Trismegistus (the most auspicious) was by mistake changed in christening to Tristram (the most unlucky). His pedantry verges on madness. On the death of his son (Tristram's brother) instead of mourning his loss, he plunges into a harangue on mortality, letting loose on poor Toby a flood of notable sayings on death from ancient authors. While making the point how the greatest cities and empires have perished, he says he had witnessed some of these ruins himself while returning from Asia. On Toby's asking—"What year of our Lord was this?"—"T was no year of our Lord, replied my father—That's impossible, cried my uncle Toby—Simpleton! said my father,—'twas forty years before Christ was born." There is no plot and the adventures which had so far been the staple of the novel are replaced by comical reflections and arbitrary digressions. There is no chronological order, the author's preface coming long after the novel is considerably advanced. The style is equally eccentric, being distinguished by endless dashes, stars, blanks and the like. The speech too is a little quaint but colloquial, and the dialogue dispenses with quotation marks. A more serious defect, however, is the author's fondness for bawdy anecdotes, dirty jokes, indecent hints and innuendoes, for which the book was denounced by Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Richardson and others. But in spite of these defects the novel is a great success in virtue of the author's real genius for humorous characterisation. Mr. Shandy, my uncle Toby and Corporal Trim take their place with the great characters of Shakespeare and Cervantes. The

charge of plagiarism that has sometimes been made against Sterne is hardly just. He certainly drew largely on Rabelais, Cervantes, Burton and many obscure and forgotten authors, but he assimilated what he borrowed and made it his own.

A Sentimental Journey is written on the same general plan or want of plan, but it is much shorter and the characterisation, though good enough, is less elaborate. Sterne had travelled in France and Italy in 1765 and intended to publish an extensive account of these travels, but he died soon after completing only the French part. He does, however, incidentally refer to his Italian tour in attacking Smelfungus (Smollett) for finding fault with everything he saw because of his 'spleen and jaundice'. On the other hand, Sterne is pleased with everything because he 'interests his heart in everything.' The book is autobiographical, its object being the revelation of the author's sentimental character. It is obvious that Sterne wanted to rehabilitate himself with the people whom he had offended by his bawdiness in *Tristram Shandy*. So the book is replete with sentiments. And they are of all kinds: of tenderness, affection, generosity, courtesy, honest poverty, chivalrous pride. Sentiment or sensibility in Sterne's sense is losing one's self-pity in the feelings of another—in appropriating others' feelings. In one of the finest passages of the book he illustrates his meaning by alluding to the story of Aeneas and Dido. He imagines himself in the Elysian fields where Aeneas meets 'the pensive shade of his forsaken Dido', but her injured spirit waves her hand and turns away 'silent from the author of her miseries and dishonours'. Seeing this, the author continues: 'I lose the feelings for myself in hers, and in those affections which were wont to make me mourn for her when I was at school'.

In this way he goes weeping through a variety of sentimental adventures he meets with in France. The piteous look on the face of the old Franciscan monk at Calais whom he has refused alms smites his heart; the poor German's lamentation on his dead donkey brings tears to his eyes; so does the captivity of the caged starling with its continuous cry, 'I can't come in', 'I can't come out'. He is moved by the story of the Chevalier of St. Louis who after distinguished military service is now reduced to selling patties on the roadside in Versailles; he is uplifted by the moving ceremony he witnesses of a Marquis of Brittany reclaiming his sword from the mayor with whom it had been deposited twenty years before, because having become poor, he had wanted to mend his fortunes by trade, which he could do only by surrendering his nobility (No nobleman in France could engage in trade, but the law of Brittany allowed a noble to reclaim his nobility after giving up trade). The last of the sentimental episodes in which his eyes are drenched with tears is that with the love-lorn maiden Maria whose story was told by Mr. Shandy in *Tristram*. Forsaken by a faithless lover, she is almost insane and is found sitting under a poplar tree with her dog in her lap. The author is so stirred by her condition that if she could only forget her lover and he his beloved Eliza, 'she should not only eat of

my bread and drink of my own cup, but Maria should lie in my bosom, and be unto me as a daughter'. The book closes abruptly with a comical scene in an inn, where there being no other chamber, he has to accommodate an Italian lady and his maid in his own bedroom. But for this scene there is little humour—the preponderant element in the book being sentiment. The style, as in *Tristram*, is colloquial and informal. The book is enjoyable though the sentiment is highly coloured, mawkish and theatrical.

Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne—the 'Four Wheels of the Novel Wain', as Saintsbury calls them—have received more space than can be claimed by the others that remain to be considered. In fact, there are only three other novels of the 18th century which can be ranked beside those noticed above: Johnson's *Rasselas*, Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* and Fanny Burney's *Evelina*.

Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759) is a novel by courtesy and owes its fame to the great name of its author. The story is thin—a peg to hang a number of moral and philosophical disquisitions on *Rasselas*, a son of the emperor of Abyssinia, is confined along with other members of the royal family in a private paradise—the "happy valley" surrounded by mountains. Tired of the joys and pleasures of "this soft existence" and curious to know how other people live, the prince escapes to Egypt, accompanied by his sister and the old philosopher Imlac. After studying the human condition in various places he comes to the conclusion that happiness is nowhere to be found, that every condition of life has its drawbacks, that "human life is everywhere a state, in which much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed." The book is throughout coloured by Johnson's constitutional melancholy, and the only consolation its melancholy wisdom affords is, that man should practise virtue, which secures a quiet conscience in this life and a brighter prospect in the next. The style, as might be expected, is ponderous. Dr. Johnson did not have that lightness of touch which is so necessary for a novel. He wrote *Rasselas*, it is said, to pay the funeral expenses of his mother who had died at the age of ninety. Such an occasion could not but draw from him a serious and didactic dissertation. Young (of the *Night Thoughts*) said that the mad astronomer who claimed to be master of the weather and the seasons was an original character in romance; but to search for characters in this novel is vain. The only character of any importance is Imlac the philosopher, and he is no other than Johnson himself.

While *Rasselas* keeps its place because of its author, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) lives because of its merit. The chief attraction of the novel is the character of its hero Dr. Primrose. In his simple-mindedness, credulity, generosity and unworldliness, he is of the class of Squire Allworthy, Parson Adams, and uncle Toby. The Rev. Dr. Primrose, vicar of Wakefield, suffers a series of misfortunes with the patience of Job and is like Job eventually restored to his original good fortune. He loses his independent fortune through a fraudulent merchant; his elder daughter Olivia is seduced by a ruffian, Squire Thornhill; his second daughter Sophia is abducted; he is imprisoned

for rent at the instance of Thornhill; his eldest son George is also jailed for challenging Thornhill to a duel to avenge his sister; and his house with all his belongings is destroyed by fire. The story, however, ends happily with his complete rehabilitation. He and George are released from prison; his daughter Olivia is found to have been legally married to Squire Thornhill; Sophia is rescued by the squire's uncle Sir William Thornhill who marries her; George marries an heiress, and the vicar himself is reinstated in his vicarage and recovers a part of his fortune.

The characters are strongly though not elaborately sketched; the vicar is not entirely free from worldly vanity and is thus a very human figure. There is delightful humour in the little feminine vanities of Mrs. Primrose and the daughters and in the pardonable worldly ambitions of Mrs. Primrose. The most amusing episode is that in which Moses, the second son, who had been sent to sell a horse, returns with a gross of green spectacles in exchange. Add to all this the charm of Goldsmith's simple style, and you have a perfect explanation of the great popularity of this book.

Rasselas is frankly didactic, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is deliberately though mildly sentimental, but the *Evelina* (1778) of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay) has no such utilitarian bias. It is a novel of manners which faithfully portrays contemporary British social life in its most ordinary everyday aspects. Its sub-title *The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* indicates its subject. Evelina and her mother Lady Belmont are abandoned by Sir John Belmont because he did not get the expected fortune as dowry with his wife. Evelina is brought up by a guardian and growing to be a beautiful and intelligent girl is introduced to the fashionable society of London where she falls in love with Lord Orville. She is pestered with the unwelcome attentions of a very determined and persistent lover Sir Clement Willoughby, and suffers many frustrations and humiliations because of her vulgar grand-mother Madame Duval. Evelina is discovered to be the daughter of Lady Belmont's nurse but is recognised by Sir John as his heir and marries Lord Orville.

Evelina is a busy, animated, well-populated story told with almost Dickensian humour. In her detailed, close, and intimate observation of men and manners Miss Burney looks forward to Jane Austen. Because of her skill in sketching life-like portraits in her novels and in her equally famous *Diary*, Dr. Johnson called her his 'little character-monger'. Her pictures of the follies and foibles, hypocrisies and snobberies, of the world of fashion, are unrivalled for their realism.

Minor Novelists

The novel from 1770 to 1800 branched off in many directions showing a flexibility of form that could be adapted to any need or temper. The more important of these developments may be grouped under three heads: the Sentimental, the Gothic, the Revolutionary.

✓ *The Sentimental School*. Mackenzie, Brooke. Sterne had many imi-

tators, the most important being the Scotsman Henry Mackenzie and the Irish Henry Brooke. Mackenzie's three novels—*The Man of Feeling* (1771), *The Man of the World* (1773), *Julia de Roubigne* (1777) and Brooke's *The Fool of Quality* (1766) are novels of tearful sentiment showing the influence of Sterne reinforced by that of Rousseau whose *Nouvelle Heloise* (New Heloise), the classic novel of French sentimentalism, had appeared in 1761. In this novel the hero and heroine suffer because they are extremely tenderhearted. The novels of Mackenzie and Brooke are pure sentiment without a gleam of humour, but they were very popular in their day. A wave of sentimentalism swept over England specially during the second half of the eighteenth century and produced scores of novels in the 1770s, with such titles as *The Tears of Sensibility*, *The Benevolent Man*, *The Tender Father*, *Julia Benson*, or *The Sufferings of Innocence*, etc.

➤ *The Gothic School.* Walpole, Clara Reve, Mrs. Radcliffe, Lewis, Beckford. The Gothic novel or the novel of mystery and terror was initiated by Horace Walpole with his *Castle of Otranto* which was published in 1765. The Castle of Otranto is haunted by the gigantic ghost of Alphonso who had been murdered and whose realm had been usurped by the grandfather of Manfred who is the Prince of Otranto in the story. According to a prophecy the usurper's rule would continue as long as the male line lasted and till the ghost became too large in size to inhabit the castle. The prophecy is fulfilled—Manfred's son is killed mysteriously on the eve of his wedding to the beautiful Isabella and the ghost has become too big for the castle and throws it down. Manfred mistakenly stabs his own daughter Matilda who is in love with Theodore who turns out to be the heir of Alphonso the rightful ruler. Manfred flies to a monastery and Theodore becomes the ruler of Otranto. The story is placed in the 12th century and its appeal is to the medieval superstition and the supernatural.

Clara Reve imitated Walpole in *The Old English Baron* (1777) by introducing in it the ghost of an English baron. But the medieval atmosphere of mystery and terror reached its climax in the work of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe whose *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) became a sensation for a generation in England and Europe. The story is set at the end of the 16th century. Emily, a beautiful girl of a good French family, has lost her parents and falls under the guardianship of a stern and ambitious aunt who in order to prevent her niece from marrying a good young man of modest means carries her off to the castle of Udolpho in the Appenines (mountain range in Italy), the home of her Italian husband Montoni. The castle is full of mysteries—dark passages, trapdoors, sliding panels and a vague suggestion of supernatural agencies and is the scene of sinister doings. Emily escapes and is united to her lover. Montoni turns out to be a leader of a gang of bandits and is captured. The mysteries have a rational explanation so that at the end there is no mystery at all. Jane Austen laughed at this book in her *Northanger Abbey*, but Mrs. Radcliffe was the most successful writer of the Gothic novel, showing great artistic

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skill in the presentation of her thrilling material and revealing a real romantic taste in her poetic pictures of wild nature. Her other Gothic novels *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Italian* follow the same pattern.

The supernatural machinery of Mrs. Radcliffe is only superficial; it is the very substance of the work of Mathew Gregory Lewis, called 'Monk Lewis' from the title of his famous book *The Monk* (1795). Ambrosio, the saintly abbot of a Spanish monastery, is seduced by the beautiful, fiendish and fiery-passioned Matilda who has entered his monastery disguised as a boy. Thus debauched he is launched on a career of lust in which he is assisted by the sorceries of Matilda. Falling in love with a girl penitent he pursues her with magic and eventually kills her to escape detection. He is caught, tried, and tortured by the Inquisition and sentenced to be burned to death (auto-de-fe). Matilda gives him a book of magic which enables him to call up Lucifer to whom he sells his soul in exchange for liberty. He escapes execution, but is wafted up high to the skies only to be hurled on a rock and dashed to pieces. Though crude in its extravagant supernaturalism, blood-curdling sensationalism, and gross licentiousness, *The Monk* is an imaginative and powerful book. The episode of the bleeding nun's apparition in which the elusive wandering Jew is presented in flesh and blood is unforgettable. No wonder the book was a brilliant success and enjoyed immense popularity for a whole generation.

The Monk was an astonishing performance for a young man of twenty. Not less astonishing was *Vathek* produced twenty years before by William Beckford at twenty-two. It was written first in French in 1782 but the English translation appeared in 1786. It is a Gothic novel—or rather novelette, for it is very short—with a difference—the difference consisting in its oriental setting and splendour. Beckford, a young, handsome Englishman with millions in fortune himself lived in the style of oriental luxury and magnificence which he ascribes to the Caliph of his story. He built a nine mile wall round his estate to keep out visitors. The Caliph Vathek, grandson of the great Harun-al-Rashid is extremely sensual and criminally extravagant in building palaces and towers. With his limitless curiosity for knowledge and lust for power he sells himself to Eblis (Devil) who promises to show him the treasures of the Kings who had ruled the earth before Adam. After sacrificing fifty children and accompanied by the beautiful Nouronihar, his consort (whom he has picked up on the way), he sets out for the ruined city of Astakar where after some queer and grotesque adventures he obtains admission to the sub-terranean hell of Eblis. The description of this hell recalls Dante's *Inferno*. Multitudes are incessantly pacing to and fro, each with his right hand on his heart, some shrieking with agony, others running with the fury of maniacs, and so forth. The ancient kings are housed in a magnificent hall and their fleshless forms are stretched on two beds of cedar with inscriptions, at their feet, of their reigns, their pomp, pride and crimes. They have still just enough life in them to bemoan

their deplorable condition condemned to eternal damnation. Solomon alone has a period to his torture by reason of the piety of his earlier years. Vathek too joins the band of the eternally damned as punishment for his insolent pride in trying to penetrate the secrets of the Almighty. The literary merit of *Vathek* consists principally in the magnificent description of the Hall of Eblis. Though *Vathek* is as eccentric, as gloomy, and as terrible as *The Monk*, it is more artistic and more genuinely romantic.

The Gothic novels or 'thrillers' as we should call them now had considerable vogue at the end of the 18th century and in the early nineteenth. Though crude by modern standards, they are historically important in that they widened the scope of the novel and stimulated the imagination of the novelist.

The Revolutionary School. The last decade of the 18th century which was the flourishing time of the Gothic novel was also the period which saw the rise of the revolutionary novel. Inspired by the writings of Rousseau and later by the French Revolution the revolutionary novelists extolled the virtues of the 'natural' man as opposed to the vices of civilisation. According to Rousseau man in a state of nature is innocent and becomes corrupt only by contact with a wicked civilisation with its artificial conventions and oppressive laws. Being a rational creature, man, he says, can live in harmony with others without laws or institutions. Later in his *Social Contract*, he developed the theory according to which government is founded upon a contract between the people and their sovereign. The people have delegated certain powers to the ruler and if he misuses them he can be deposed. This was the philosophic basis of the French Revolution which when it broke out intensified the revolutionary fervour of the novelists by its slogan of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Among the novels of revolutionary propaganda the most important are those of William Godwin's, *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799). Other propagandist novels deserving mention are those of Godwin's friend and associate the dramatist Thomas Holcroft, *Anna St. Ives* (1792) and *Hugh Trevor* (1794); those of Robert Bage, the Quaker free-thinker, *Man As He Is* (1792) and *Hermesprong or Man As He Is Not* (1796). Mrs Inchbald, actress, dramatist and novelist, and Miss Hannah More, dramatist and philanthropist, are only on the fringe of the revolutionary group. They wrote didactic novels attacking social conventions. Mrs. Inchbald's *Simple Story* and Hannah More's *Caelebs in Search of a Wife* were popular.

The only novel of this group which cannot be passed over without comment is Godwin's *Caleb Williams*. Falkland, a noble-minded gentleman is publicly insulted by a cruel and rascally squire who is soon after found murdered. Falkland who has committed the murder keeps silent while two innocent persons are hanged. Caleb Williams, a youth of humble birth who is secretary to Falkland, comes to know of his master's guilt, and though he takes an oath of secrecy he becomes the object of constant suspicion. Finding his situation

intolerable, he escapes, but is relentlessly pursued by Falkland who ultimately lands him in prison on a charge of theft. Driven to desperation Williams discloses the whole truth, and Falkland dies of shame.

The novel was written with the object of exposing the tyrannical power of the aristocracy and the helplessness of the poor and the under-privileged over whom it is exercised. It is a powerful novel, regardless of its political object. In fact, the characters and incidents are so absorbing that the reader is hardly aware of any such design.

CHAPTER 28

THE AGE OF JOHNSON: PROSE (ESSAY)

Revival of the periodical essay by Johnson and Goldsmith—Johnson: his life, his works, his reputation, his style, his criticism—Boswell: his *Life of Johnson*—its greatness as biography—Goldsmith: his life, works, his versatile genius—His character—His style—Other Essayists and periodicals.

The Essay and the Novel were the two chief gifts of the 18th century. The 18th century novel having been discussed in the preceding chapter, it is time we took up the thread of the essay at the point where we left off. The essay languished after Steele and Addison in the hands of inferior imitators and for nearly forty years there was no worthy successor of the *Spectator* (with the possible exception of Fielding's *Champion*) until the appearance of Johnson's *Rambler* (1750-52). This was succeeded six years later by his *Idler* (1758-60). Goldsmith's little and short-lived periodical *The Bee* appeared in October-November 1759. During 1761 he contributed a series of 'Chinese Letters' to the *Public Ledger* which were later published separately as *The Citizen of the World* in 1762. Johnson and Goldsmith were both professional men of letters who, though they turned their hands to all forms of writing open to them, had a special aptitude for the essay and did their best work in this kind. Their work in poetry, fiction, and drama is noticed in appropriate places elsewhere; their essays will occupy us here. And this is also the proper place for a few biographical details.

Samuel Johnson (1709-84), the most prominent figure in the literature of the 18th century, was the son of a book-seller at Lichfield in the Midlands. After some local schooling he went to Pembroke College, Oxford, but owing to poverty left the University after a year or so without a degree. He married a widow some twenty years older than himself and tried schoolmastering for a time but didn't succeed. His physical defects—bad eyesight, glandular swellings and convulsive movements—together with his irritable temper, clumsy manners, and proneness to melancholy and indolence were serious handicaps. In 1737 he went to London where he remained for the rest of his life. All that is known for certain of his early life in

London is that he had to struggle hard for a living and endured acute poverty.

A year after his arrival in London he began writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In the same year he published his poem *London*. In 1747 he issued his plan for his *Dictionary* of the English language addressed to Lord Chesterfield to which the noble lord made no response. Feeling slighted but undismayed, he went ahead with the work on his own and finished it after eight years in 1755. Hoping that it would be dedicated to him Lord Chesterfield tried to make up for his past neglect of the author by praising the *Dictionary* in the *World*. This drew from Johnson the famous letter in which he snubbed his lordship in language which is as manly as it is magnificent.

During these same years (1747-55) he published his now little known tragedy *Irene* (1748, produced by his pupil Garrick), his greatest poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) and his essays in the *Rambler* (1750-52). His mother dying in 1759 he wrote *Rasselas* to pay her funeral expenses and some other debts. By the time he issued the *Rambler* he had attained a very high literary reputation and in 1762 he was granted a pension of £300 by the government of George III. This made him independent and later years of his life were happier, with his club, friends, and his position as literary dictator. In 1765 he brought out his long-deferred edition of *Shakespeare*. In 1775 appeared his *Journey to the Eastern Islands of Scotland*, an account of his visit to the Hebrides with Boswell in 1773. In the same year he received the doctor's degree from Oxford. His last work was the *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81). In addition to the works listed above, Johnson wrote a large number of miscellaneous pieces, such as prefaces, prologues, introductions, dedications, political pamphlets, sermons, prayers and meditations, etc. He was a staunch Tory in politics and a High Churchman in religion. In later life he was held in high esteem not only as the literary dictator of his age but also as a sage and philosopher.

It is a commonplace of criticism that Johnson the man has eclipsed Johnson the writer. He was a singular combination of robust commonsense, vast and varied learning, fearless honesty and independence, piety, kindliness, rough manners, and strong prejudices. He has been so vividly described by his biographer Boswell that his memory is stamped on the mind of every educated person. He dominated the literary stage of his time as no one else has done before or since. The very greatness of his personality has, as a consequence, obscured his greatness as a writer. Though not a great poet, Johnson is certainly among the greatest of prose-writers. All his writings, whether in prose or verse, are full of moral teaching and sententious wisdom. His style, carefully balanced and antithetical, is pompous and pedantic, heavily loaded as it is with learning and latinisms. The characteristic 'Johnsonese' is not unnaturally associated in the popular mind with bombast. But in the best passages, it has a stateliness, a dignity, and sonorousness that links it with that of Milton, Browne, and Jeremy Taylor.

The *Rambler* which was started to revive the *Spectator* vein was not quite successful. It was too serious and ponderous to please the general public. It lacked the light touch, the geniality, the easy grace of Steele and Addison. Johnson who wrote almost all the papers (only four essays were by others) did not deal with the fashions and frivolities of the times, but concentrated on piety and morals—and in this respect it would be hard to find a more earnest or a more eloquent preacher. The *Idler* which followed was lighter and more lively in vein and was more successful. The light satirical sketch of 'Dick Minim the Critic' is in the best vein of Mr. Spectator.

The *Dictionary*, which remained the standard English dictionary for a century, was a monument of patient industry though not of etymological accuracy. Some of its definitions betray the personal opinions and prejudices of the author and have become famous for their whimsical humour. For example, 'pension' is defined as 'an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England, it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country'. (And yet he himself accepted a pension!) 'Oats' is defined as 'a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people'. He was a genuine humorist and could laugh at himself, as when he defined a lexicographer as 'a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge, that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of words'.

His edition of *Shakespeare*, though superseded by later and more scholarly research, contains some very illuminating notes and some of his emendations are still the best. His candour as annotator is refreshing. Coming across a passage he cannot explain, he says: 'I can make nothing of this passage' and passes on. What a contrast to the practice of some modern annotators who simply ignore a difficult passage as if there was no difficulty at all! But the most remarkable thing about Johnson's *Shakespeare* is its preface. In this he rises above the prejudices of the neo-classical school not only by giving high praise to Shakespeare as the poet and dramatist of nature, but by defending his mingling of tragedy and comedy, and his flouting of the 'unities'. By saying that 'there is always an appeal from criticism to nature' he admitted the inadequacy of the so-called rules and cleared the path for the future romantics. The *Preface to Shakespeare* is one of the most valuable contributions to the literature of criticism.

The Lives of the Poets. Johnson was requested by a deputation of prominent London booksellers to write these biographies for an edition of the English poets which they had planned. When the work was completed the *Lives* were published separately from the texts in 1781. Fifty two poets beginning with Cowley were included, but Johnson had nothing to do with the selection, for it is incredible that he would have excluded Herrick and Marvel and included some tenth rate rhymesters of whom nobody has ever heard. No living poet was included. The *Lives* maintain a happy balance between biography and criticism. The facts of each life together with the writer's charac-

ter and the quality of his mind are recorded first; this is followed by criticism of his work. Johnson was interested in the poets not merely as writers but as men. This is the true explanation of his notorious blunders in respect of Milton and Gray. Milton was a Puritan and a regicide republican whom Johnson a staunch anglican and Tory could not forgive. His prejudice against Gray was personal and idiosyncratic. Johnson who had endured poverty and hardship had little sympathy with Gray who had lived all his life in the sheltered seclusion of his college. There is also just a suspicion that perhaps the great doctor had not received from Gray that homage of adulation which he had come to regard as his due from all and sundry. It is nothing but deliberate fault-finding when he rebukes Gray for his supplication to Father Thames in the Eton Ode. Did he forget that he himself had invoked the river Nile in *Rasselas* twenty years before? —‘Answer, great Father of waters! thou that rollest thy floods through eighty nations, to the invocations of the daughter of thy native king. Tell me if thou waterest, through all thy course, a single habitation from which thou dost not hear the murmurs of complaint’. His strictures on Milton’s ‘*Lycidas*’ are too well-known to need quotation (see chapter on Milton). The grounds of criticism are the same in both cases. Johnson wanted a poem to be ‘poetical and rational’. ‘Poetical’ for him meant naturalness and newness, and he did not find either of these qualities in *Lycidas* or Gray’s Odes. He rejects mythology as mechanical and conventional. He had ignored the rules of neo-classical criticism in his estimate of Shakespeare but he did not extend the same concession to Milton and Gray. Quite apart from personal or political prejudice, Johnson had no ear for any music except that of the heroic couplet and was insensible to the higher beauties of the poetry of imagination. As regards the others, he examines them all by the neo-classic standards and is on the whole just in his assessments. He overpraises Pope, which is quite understandable, for he was in perfect sympathy with Pope and his school of poetry. We must accept him as we find him—a man, as Matthew Arnold said, ‘who worked for an age of prose’. As such his judgments even at their worst have the freshness and strength of a great and original mind. There are times when we tire of the inanities and sentimentalities of adulatory criticism, and relish the shock of contradiction and denial, and then Johnson comes to us as a tonic, like a breeze of fresh air after confinement in a crowded and stuffy room. *The Lives of the Poets* are a classic in their own kind, constituting as they do the largest single work of practical criticism in English.

Boswell (1740-95). Johnson’s name is so intimately associated with that of his biographer Boswell that it is only fitting that he should have a place in the same chapter with his idol, even though he himself was not a notable essayist. James Boswell, the son of a Scottish Judge, was destined for the legal profession, but though called to the bar he didn’t succeed. Vain, proud, and dissipated, he had literary and political ambitions. His meeting with Johnson in 1763 was the turning

point of his life which but for this most lucky accident might have been a failure. His admiration of Johnson was unbounded and he cultivated his friendship assiduously during his frequent visits to London. His *Life of Johnson* which appeared in 1791 is admittedly the greatest biography in English. His *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785) is more entertaining than Johnson's own account of it in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775). A mass of letters and manuscripts discovered in 1927 and 1930 and now published as his *Journals* shows him in the role of a diarist almost as frank and unabashed as Pepys. But it is the *Life* which has made him immortal. Johnson was a brilliant talker who often talked 'for victory', and the *Life* is principally a record of Johnson's talks. The secret of its charm lies partly in the disciple's intense devotion to the master and partly in his art of recording. How great was Boswell's devotion is demonstrated by a single incident. When he had succeeded in his determined and desperate efforts to persuade Johnson to accompany him to Mr. Dilly's for dinner, Boswell writes: "When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him, to set out for Gretna Green". As regards the great doctor's notable sayings, even those who have never read a line of his prose or poetry, can quote a few. For example: "Patriotism is the last resort of a scoundrel". "I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else". "There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn". "Being in a ship is being in a jail with the chance of being drowned". "Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it". "Claret is a liquor for boys; port for men; but he who aspires to be a hero must drink brandy". "Hell is paved with good intentions". "When two ride a horse, one must ride behind" (on the question of equality between husband and wife).

Besides the talks, there is inexhaustible matter for entertainment in the scenes and situations in which Boswell contrived with admirable dexterity to draw out Johnson. Indeed the assembling of such an overwhelming mass of detail (the Globe edition has 700 pages of small print) is itself an achievement, specially when it is remembered that Boswell met Johnson only in the latter part of his life. The result is a sharp-eyed and zestful biography which unerringly and lovingly portrays the most conspicuous personality of the 18th century—Johnson in his habit as he lived. Johnson's wit and wisdom, his good nature and good humour, his large figure and his gruff ways—all these are in the picture. The picture is a little idealised, but it is nevertheless the true Johnson. It is always so with great art. The picture is larger than life and Johnson lives in our memory like a classic character out of Shakespeare. A great subject had found a great painter and they have made each other immortal.

Goldsmith (1728-74), less distinguished in person and much less so in conversation than Johnson is, however, better known as a writer.

Oliver Goldsmith, the son of an Irish clergyman, was born in an Irish village whose identity is not certain. After attending some schools he went to Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar. His career there was uneventful except for one incident. For holding a mixed entertainment in his rooms he was thrashed by his tutor, upon which he ran away from the College. He was persuaded to rejoin, however, and took his B.A. in 1749. He was pressed to take orders, but as he disliked priesthood, he appeared before the bishop in scarlet breeches and was promptly rejected. His father having died and his mother who had other children being unable to support him, his uncle got him a tutorship. This also came to nothing, for as soon as he had saved some thirty pounds, he left on a spending spree and returned home with a tale of fictitious adventures. His uncle then sent him to London to study law, but he got no farther than Dublin, where he gambled away the money he had been equipped with. At last in 1752 he went to Edinburgh to study medicine. Two years later, tiring of Edinburgh, he transferred himself and his studies to Leyden (Holland). After a year there he left on a walking tour of Europe, passing through France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, and paying his way by playing on the flute and debating at the universities. After a year of this vagabondage he returned to England with nothing in his pocket except a dubious medical degree or diploma collected from some university in the course of his travels. On the strength of this he was ever after called 'Dr' Goldsmith, and even attempted practice. This not succeeding, he tried several other professions—he was by turns a chemist's assistant, a proof reader, a school master and according to a legend a strolling player—until in 1759 he settled down to hackwriting for booksellers and publishers. In the same year he published his 'Enquiry into the Present State of Polite learning in Europe' which attracted some attention, conducted his short-lived periodical the *Bee* and contributed to Smollett's *British Magazine* his fine essay 'Reverie at the Boar's Head Tavern in East Cheap'. In 1760 he began writing in the *Public Ledger* the series of 'Chinese Letters' which were collected and published subsequently as *The Citizen of the World* (1762). His reputation as an essayist having been established he was now in great demand as editor and compiler, and during the next eleven or twelve years produced a large number of histories, biographies and books of popular science. It was during the latter years of his life that he wrote his great poems and plays as well as his famous novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*. There is an interesting story behind the publication of this novel. One day in 1766, Johnson received an urgent message from Goldsmith saying he was held in durance by his landlady for nonpayment of rent. She threatened to send him to prison unless he made immediate payment or consented to marry her. Johnson gave the messenger a guinea, promising to follow. When he arrived he found Goldsmith seated at his table with a bottle of wine before him. The guinea had been well laid out to pluck up his spirits! Johnson searching through the drawers of a table came upon the manuscript of *The Vicar* and sold it for £60.

Goldsmith had many shortcomings, but these have been much exaggerated by his biographers. We must also beware of the prejudiced remarks of men like Garrick and Boswell who were jealous of him. His physical features were not very attractive; his face was deeply pock-marked. He was vain and fond of gay clothes and luxurious living. He was an incurable spendthrift and was consequently always in financial difficulties. He earned much more than Johnson, and yet he died £2,000 in debt. But this was largely due to his excessive generosity. Simple-minded and tender-hearted, he was easily imposed upon by cheats and professional beggars. He did not shine in conversation, but he was not always the 'Poor Poll' of Garrick's remark. Now and then he could make a brilliant retort. When Johnson expressed contempt for those who found it difficult to make animals in a fable talk, Goldsmith said: "This is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales." Goldsmith's poems and plays, his novel and his essays could not have been written by the ridiculous fool he is made out to be by Boswell. Johnson, who was alive to the weaknesses of his friend, recognised his worth and genius. Writing to Langton after Goldsmith's death he said, "Let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man." And this verdict has been endorsed by posterity.

Great as Goldsmith is as a poet, playwright and novelist, he is greater as an essayist. Neither Johnson nor any other essayists of the century made any advance upon the *Spectator* model. Johnson was too grave for that type of essay, and others though they introduced some new subjects, did nothing to improve the form. Goldsmith, on the other hand, had just the right temper for the literary essay and carried it a step further to the more personal type practised by Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt and Lamb. His essays are everywhere informed by his lovable personality. His simplicity, sweetness, tender and tolerant humanity shine on every page. He had also a penetrating sense of humanity which enabled him to seize the essence of a character in the fewest possible words. His 'Beau Tibbs' and the 'Man in the Black' are unforgettable. Finally, his charming personality is reflected in the charm of his style. It is what may be called a soothing style—simple, spontaneous, quiet and fluent—which is even more pleasing than that of Steele and Addison.

Minor Essayists

The periodical essay revived by Johnson and Goldsmith continued to the end of the century until the appearance of modern magazines and reviews. The more notable of the periodicals besides those issued by Johnson and Goldsmith were the *Gentleman's Magazine* (in which Johnson began his career as a journalist), the *Public Ledger* (in which Goldsmith wrote his Chinese Letters), the *World*, the *Connoisseur*, the *Mirror*, the *Lounger*, the *Observer* and the *Looker-on*. The *World* and the *Connoisseur* were 'society' papers meant for aristocrats. In the *World* wrote such men of leisure and fashion as Chesterfield and

Horace Walpole. It was in the *World* that Chesterfield's praise of Johnson's *Dictionary* appeared, which provoked the latter to write his indignant letter. Cowper idling at the Bar wrote a few papers in the *Connoisseur*. The *Mirror* and the *Lounger* were issued by a group of Scottish wits at Edinburgh led by Henry Mackenzie, the sentimental novelist, called 'the Northern Addison' by Scott.

CHAPTER 29

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LETTER WRITERS

Eighteenth Century ideal time for letter writing—Lady Mary Montagu—Chesterfield—Walpole—Pope—Gray—Cowper—'Junius'.

The 18th century was a great age for letter-writing. Letter-writing is an art that can be cultivated only in an unhurried age of ease and leisure, and the 18th century was ideal for this purpose. 'The Peace of the Augustans' is no figment of the romantic imagination. Aristocratic ladies and gentlemen filled their leisure hours with writing for amusement. In addition to writing satirical verses, squibs, and essays for the periodicals, they found an agreeable outlet for their talents in writing long letters. The letters of this century both by their bulk and by their quality constitute a stock of literature important enough to deserve a special chapter.

The most famous letter writers of the century—Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lord Chesterfield, and Horace Walpole—were all persons of quality. Pope, Gray, and Cowper are also well-known for their letters, and it is significant that they too were men of means and position. Fanny Burney and Hannah More, who both enjoyed the friendship of Johnson and his circle, also deserve mention as writers of letters which contain interesting character-sketches.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) was the eldest daughter of a Whig Earl who later became the Duke of Kingston. She was educated at home and was noted for her beauty and charm. At twenty-one she eloped with a Whig noble Wortley Montagu who after the accession of George I was sent as Ambassador to Turkey. She accompanied her husband and in her letters to her sister, Pope, and other friends she gave picturesque descriptions of Turkish life, dress, customs and manners. Returning to England in 1718 she introduced inoculation against smallpox. The incident which turned Pope, a great friend of hers, into a bitter enemy belongs to this period (*See under Pope*). After her daughter had followed her own example by eloping with Lord Bute, she again left for the continent in 1739 living for the most part in Italy, whence she wrote a large number of letters mostly to her daughter, Lady Bute. She returned to England after

her husband's death in 1761, and died the next year. Her letters were published without authority in 1763. They were later edited by her grandson and published in 1837. Astonishingly clever, Lady Mary had talent, wit, learning, and solid good sense. She wrote essays as well as clever satirical verses, but she owes her place in literature to her letters. Her style is easy, familiar and elegant, though now and then it lapses into the slipshod. They are entertaining to read, full as they are of picturesque foreign scenes, fashionable gossip and anecdotes. The Turkish and Italian letters are the best, specially those of the latter group written to her daughter. One single letter pertaining to the education of her grand-daughter contains such good things as the following: 'True knowledge consists in knowing things, not words'. 'Languages are more properly to be called vehicles of learning than learning itself'. 'It is a saying of Thucydides that ignorance is bold and knowledge reserved'. She is disconcertingly frank sometimes, which seems rather unlady-like. But even apart from this, there is a certain hardness of tone about her which betrays lack of finer feelings and higher aspirations.

Chesterfield (1694-1773). Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth Earl of Chesterfield, was educated at Cambridge, made the grand tour, became M.P. and occupied several high offices including that of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He was a capable administrator, an accomplished courtier, and a notable statesman and orator. Becoming deaf he retired from public life in his early fifties. He wrote essays in the periodicals and his rank as an essayist is high. His fame as a writer, however, rests upon his *Letters to His Son* (1774). They were in the strictest sense private, but were published immediately after his death by the son's widow. In later life he wrote another series of letters to his godson (his successor to the title) published in 1890, which though similar in design are less remarkable.

The letters were designed to educate and prepare his natural son for entry into the world and shining in society and public life. They are written in chaste, clear and graceful English and in a style that is singularly polished and dignified. In fact, in point of expression Chesterfield is far superior to both Lady Mary and Walpole. The substance of the letters, however, is more debatable. Dr. Johnson, who never forgave Chesterfield's indifference to him, said that the letters taught the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master. Though this is put too strongly, there is no denying the fact that their ethical standard is not high. Chesterfield's maxims and formulas for success are not very edifying. He seems to have had no religious or moral scruples. Though decent, courteous, and generous, he was not above gambling, drinking, mistresses and other fashionable vices of the time. The advice he gives may be summed up in one word—gentlemanliness. The young man was to enter a society which cared more for manners than morals. He was therefore advised to cultivate courtesy, consideration for others, and generally a regard for the accepted conventions. This so-called gentlemanliness, however, as elaborated by Chesterfield is hardly distinguishable from low

cunning. He constantly reminds us of Bacon who also emphasized external graces rather than purity of character. In fact, he out-Bacons Bacon when he seriously recommends adultery as an ingredient in his prescription. He had a very low opinion of women. Sample this: 'A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them'.

While this unabashed immorality has certainly tarnished his image, it cannot deprive him of the credit due to his knowledge of, at least, part of human nature, his shrewd observation of life, and much good sense and sagacity. His letters—some of which read like essays—on such subjects as judicious flattery, good breeding, personal dignity, and the like, are not only brilliantly written, but are unexceptionable in their sound sense and worldly wisdom. He has unintentionally but unquestionably taken his place in the 'Wit and Wisdom' series. Here are a few bits—

'For my part, I really think that, next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most pleasing'.

'The desire of being pleased is universal. The desire of pleasing should be so too'.

'A merry fellow was never yet a respectable man'.

Horace Walpole (1717-97), the youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, was educated at Eton and Cambridge, toured the continent with Gray, was M.P. and as the son of the Prime Minister enjoyed many sinecures and had sufficient means to indulge his tastes for art and literature. He turned his villa near Twickenham into the Gothic Castle of 'Strawberry Hill'. This he made a sort of museum or curiosity shop. He also set up a printing press there in which he printed the *Elegy* and the *Odes* of Gray as well as works by other authors. He dabbled in literature and wrote essays, verses, squibs, a gruesome tragedy, and several other things dealing with history and art criticism—all of which, however, with the possible exception of the *Essays* are unimportant. His literary reputation rests on the *Castle of Otranto* the 'Gothic' novel already noticed, and his letters. These, about four thousand in number, deal in a brisk and breezy manner with party politics, foreign affairs, literature and art, personal gossip and scandal. Their interest is mainly of matter, most of it autobiographical. Walpole was a vain, frivolous, ill-natured snob, but the very sincerity of his self-revelation shows that he was not as bad as he has been painted by some. In any case, these and other defects of his character do not detract from the sheer readability of the letters. Flippant, ironical, humorous, Walpole is always amusing. That he was not devoid of critical insight is shown by his famous dictum in a letter to Horace Mann that 'this world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel'. There are better and more charming letter writers—Gray and Cowper for example, even lady Mary and Chesterfield—but in sheer bulk and variety Walpole has the first place. For a taste, two extracts follow.

From a description of Strawberry Hill: Two delightful roads, that you would call dusty, supply me continually with coaches and chaises; barges as solemn as

Barons of the Exchequer move under my window; Richmond Hill and Ham Walks bound my prospects; but thank God: the Thames is between me and the Duchess of Queensberry. Dawagers as plenty as flounders, inhabit all around; and Pope's ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poetical moonlight (1747).

From a description of the routine of London Life: Do but recollect these last ten years. The beginning of October, one is certain that everybody will be at Newmarket, and the Duke of Cumberland will lose, and Shafto win, two or three thousand pounds. After that, while people are preparing to come to town for the winter, the Ministry is suddenly changed, and all the world comes to learn how it happened, a fortnight sooner than they intended; and fully persuaded that the new arrangement cannot last a month. The Parliament opens; everybody is bribed, and the new establishment is perceived to be composed of adamant. November passes, with two or three self-murders, and a new play. Christmas arrives; everybody goes out of town; and a riot happens in one of the theatres. The Parliament meets again; taxes are warmly opposed, and some citizen makes his fortune by a subscription. The Opposition languishes; balls and assemblies begin; some master and miss begin to get together, are talked of, and give occasion to forty more matches being invented; an unexpected debate starts up at the end of the session that makes more noise than anything that was designed to make a noise, and subsides again in a new peerage or two. Ranelagh opens and Vauxhall, one produces scandal, and t'other a drunken quarrel. People separate, some to Tunbridge, and some to all the horse-races in England; and so the year comes again to October (1763).

Pope, Gray, Cowper. The letters of Pope, with a few exceptions, are artificial and unimportant. They are well prepared essays on set subjects. Pretending they were not for publication, he edited them carefully so as to present himself in the most favourable light and contrived to get them published through his agents. Some of his letters to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu are thinly disguised declarations of love. In a letter to her (September 1717), after describing the death, by lightning, of two poor rustic lovers who were honoured with a little monument, he writes:

Upon the whole, I cannot think these people unhappy. The greatest happiness, next to living as they would have done, was to die as they did. The greatest honour people of this low degree could have, was to be remembered on a little monument; unless you will give them another—that of being honoured with a tear from the finest eyes in the world. I know you have tenderness; you must have it; it is the very emanation of good sense and virtue; the finest minds, like the finest metals, dissolve the easiest.

Judged by quality, not by quantity, the letters of Gray and Cowper must take the first place. The letters of Gray are as finished and scholarly in their composition as his verse. They are warm, imaginative, and picturesque. His description, in a letter to his mother, of his journey to the famous monastery of Grand Chartreuse in Savoy is not only picturesque but replete with poetry and romance. Referring to this visit in a subsequent letter to a friend, he writes:

In our little journey up the Grand Chartreuse, I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining. Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits there at noon-day. You have Death perpetually before your eyes only so far removed as to compose the mind without frightening it.

The letters of Cowper are by far the most charming things of their kind in English. Their simplicity, sweetness, and above all, their spontaneity, make them unique. Though Cowper was melancholic by temper his letters show he had a delightful vein of sportive and innocently mischievous humour. Writing to the friend who had sent him a copy of Johnson's *Life of Milton*, he expresses his irritation at the biographer's unfair criticism of *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost* thus: 'Oh! I could thrash his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pockets' (October 31, 1779). The following extract is from a letter describing the visit of a Parliamentary candidate to seek his support:

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr Grenville, advancing towards me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence; which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, the drapier, addressing himself to me at that moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion by saying that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient, as it should seem, for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a riband from his buttonhole. The boys hallooed, the dogs barked, Puss scampered; the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and for which had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the country, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner, perhaps, was a little mortified because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them (March 29, 1784).

Gilbert White (1720-93). While we are on the subject of letters, it is interesting to remember that Gilbert White's famous *Natural History of Selbourne* (1789) is made up entirely of letters to two friends. White, a clergyman, had been an Oxford Fellow before settling at Selbourne in Hampshire, where he spent the rest of his life. He writes delightedly of the flora and fauna of Selbourne—of ancient oaks and elms and rushes (and rush lights), of deer, pheasants, and other game, of swallows and ravens and their habits, etc. interspersing his observations with pious or philosophical reflections. His minute observation and the simple, natural grace of his style, have endeared him to all lovers of nature in much the same way as Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*.

'Junius'. The heading of this chapter is the only excuse for referring here to the letters of 'Junius', for, being political and seditious and appearing, as they did, in a newspaper, they have nothing in common with the letters we have been considering. They have excited considerable interest in the past and are not without some literary interest even today, due as much to their brilliance as to the mystery surrounding their writer. During a period of three years, from January 1769 to January 1772, there appeared in the most popular newspaper of the day the *Public Advertiser*, a series of letters signed by Junius attacking the king, his ministers and other prominent persons connected with the government. It was a time of great excitement. The Government's American policy, imposition of new taxes, and above all, the persecution of Wilkes had created great dissatisfaction among the people. The letters appearing at such a time and in such an atmosphere had the effect of further inflaming public opinion. The Government made every effort to trace the author but failed. Woodfall, the editor, was prosecuted for publishing a letter attacking the King, but was acquitted. He published a collected and revised edition of the letters in 1772, but didn't know who his correspondent was. And nobody to this day knows for certain the identity of Junius. The more generally accepted theory is that which connects the letters with Sir Philip Francis who after serving in the War Office became a member of the Governor-General's council in Bengal, was always at loggerheads with Warren Hastings with whom he fought a duel and was wounded, on his return became a Whig M.P. and led the campaign for the impeachment of his enemy.

We are, however, not interested in theories and controversies over the author. The letters are the thing, and their excellence cannot be denied. They are bold and brilliant. Bold, very bold, *for the time*, for compared with the violence of invective indulged in by the Yellow press today they must be accounted tame. The elements that contribute to their brilliance are rhetoric, balance, antithesis, sarcasm and abuse. It is quite clear from the perusal of even a few letters that the writer was prompted more by personal pique, jealousy, and malice than by the cause of the public. Three extracts follow.

George III and Wilkes

He (Wilkes) said more than moderate men would justify, but not enough to entitle him to the honour of Your Majesty's resentment. The rays of royal indignation, collected upon him, served only to illuminate, and could not consume. Animated by the favour of the people on one side, and heated by persecution on the other, his views and sentiments changed with his situation. Hardly serious at first, he is now an enthusiast. The coldest bodies warm with opposition, the hardest sparkle in collision. There is a holy mistaken zeal in politics as well as in religion. By persuading others, we convince ourselves. The passions are engaged, and create a maternal affection in the mind, which forces us to love the cause for which we suffer.

To the Duke of Grafton

The character of the reputed ancestors of some men has made it possible for their descendants to be vicious in the extreme, without being degenerate. Those of

your Grace, for instance, left no distressing examples of virtue even to their legitimate posterity; and you may look back with pleasure to an illustrious pedigree in which heraldry has not left a single good quality upon record to insult or upbraid you. You have better proofs of your descent, my Lord, than the register of a marriage, or any troublesome inheritance of reputation. There are some hereditary strokes of character by which a family may be as clearly distinguished as by the blackest features of the human face. Charles the First lived and died a hypocrite. Charles the Second was a hypocrite of another sort, and should have died upon the same scaffold. At the distance of a century, we see their different characters happily revived and blended in your Grace. Sullen and severe without religion, profligate without gaiety, you live like Charles II without being an amiable companion; and for aught I know, may die as his father did, without the reputation of a martyr.

To the King

(The concluding part of the letter for publishing which Woodfall, the editor of the newspaper, was prosecuted).

The name of Stuart of itself is only contemptible; armed with the sovereign authority, their principles are formidable. The prince who imitates their conduct should be warned by example; and while he plumes himself upon the security of his title to the crown, should remember that as it was acquired by one revolution (1688), it may be lost by another.

CHAPTER 30

THE AGE OF JOHNSON: MISCELLANEOUS PROSE

History on the grand scale—Hume—Robertson—Gibbon: his *Decline and Fall*—Its classic character—His *Autobiography*—Burke: his written oratory—His *Reflections on the French Revolution*—Paine and Godwin—Hume's Philosophy—Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*—Joshua Reynolds—Blackstone's *Commentaries*—William Law—The Wesley brothers and Methodism.

The Novel, the Essay and the letters, do not exhaust the prose literature of the 18th century. The remarkable growth of prose in this century is reflected as well in other departments—history, philosophy, politics, economics, and theology. Some of the works in these subjects have an enduring interest because of the distinction in their literary style.

History: Hume, Robertson, Gibbon

Piecemeal history, quite apart from mere chronicles and compilations, had existed before in Raleigh's fragmentary *History of the World* (1614), Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* (1704) and Burnet's *History of my Own Time* (1723-34). These have historical as well as literary value, but historical literature on a grand scale was developed about the middle of the century by two Scotsmen, Hume and Robertson, and was lifted to its greatest heights by Gibbon. David Hume's *History of England* (1754-61) and William Robertson's *History of Scotland* and *History of the Reign of Charles V* were for long standard works, and though now antiquated by later researches, they are still eminently readable because of their clear and elegant prose. As Hume was also a philosopher, his history is tinged by his view of man. Man, according to him, never changes, and responds in the same way in all ages to the same challenges. History is thus a guide to future conduct. Robertson too takes a large and reasoned view of history, though his outlook is not so philosophical as Hume's. But they are both surpassed by Gibbon whose *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88) is the noblest monument of historical writing in the English or perhaps in any language.

Edward Gibbon (1737-94) who came of a good 'business' family, was educated at Oxford and Lausanne (Switzerland). He served in

the militia where he rose to be colonel. He was a member of Johnson's 'Club' and for a time sat in House of Commons as M.P. For supporting North's Government by his silent votes he was made a Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, a post he held for three years. He was an accomplished scholar in Latin and French and later studied Greek. It was during his tour of the Continent in 1764 that the theme of his great history came to his mind in Rome—an occasion described in a thrilling passage of his *Autobiography*. The work was published in six volumes between 1776 and 1788.

It is difficult to overpraise the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The magnitude of the subject comprising as it does a period of 1300 years (from the second to the fifteenth century), the epic manner of its treatment and the grandeur of a style unmatched in any work merely historical, have made this work a classic not only of history but also of literature. Gibbon's thesis that the fall of Rome was due mainly to the rise of Christianity gave great offence to the orthodox and he was made the target of many attacks. But he remained supremely indifferent. "I have described," he said epigrammatically, "the triumph of barbarism and religion." He was certainly not an orthodox Christian. His sceptical and irreverent attitude to religion is best illustrated by his definition of the Islamic religion: "The faith which under the name of Islam he (Mohammed) preached to his family and nation, is compounded of an eternal truth, and a necessary fiction—that there is only one God, and that Mohammed is the apostle of God" (Chapter 1). The phrase 'a necessary fiction' is a shrewd thrust not only at Islam but at Christianity and all religions that believe in an intermediary between man and his God. Modern researches may have added some facts or modified the conclusions of Gibbon, but his general accuracy has never been seriously questioned. Gibbon can never be superseded. In the words of Freeman: "Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."

Gibbon's *Autobiography* put together by his friend Lord Sheffield should not be passed over inasmuch as it not only satisfies our curiosity about the life and character of the greatest historian of England, but provides a good illustration of his general style. While at Lausanne he fell in love with Susan Curchod, a clergyman's daughter, but as his father refused consent, he 'sighed as a lover but obeyed as a son'. It is interesting to note that the failure of this romance made history, for Susan married the famous French statesman Necker whose ill-advised dismissal from the government aggravated the tottering economy of France and precipitated the French Revolution. Another interesting fact to note is that their daughter was the celebrated blue-stocking Madam de Stael. His description of the occasion when the idea of writing his history occurred to him is memorable: 'As I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started into my mind'. Even more memorable and moving is the passage describing the completion of his work. "It was on the day, or rather night, of the

27 June of 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house, in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a berceau, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion and that, whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." His description of Oxford is not complimentary. "The fellows of my time," he says, "were decent easy men who supinely enjoyed the gifts of the founder; their days were filled by a series of uniform employments; the chapel and the hall, the Coffee-house and the Common room, till they retired, weary and well satisfied, to a long slumber. From the toil of reading, or thinking, or writing, they had absolved their conscience; and the first shoots of learning and ingenuity withered in the ground, without yielding any fruits to the owners or the public. Their conversation stagnated in a round of college business, Tory politics, personal anecdotes and private scandal; their dull and deep potations excused the brisk intemperance of youth; and their constitutional toasts were not expressive of the most lively loyalty for the house of Hanover."

Politics: Burke, Godwin, Paine

Edmund Burke (1729-97) famous as orator, statesman, and writer was an Irishman educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He studied Law in London but was never called to the bar. He was a member of Johnson's 'Club' and made his debut in literature with *A Vindication of Natural Society*, an ironical repudiation of Bolingbroke's rationalistic theory of Society and the *Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, an essay on aesthetics showing that a thing is sublime or beautiful because it soothes our nerves or refreshes and relaxes our spirit. In 1765 he entered Parliament and remained a member for the rest of his life. He was the backbone of the Whig party and fought for the freedom of Parliament against the king and the "King's friends" in their attempts to corrupt it. The most philosophical of the statesmen of his time, he fought passionately for justice and freedom. He condemned repression at home, impeached Warren Hastings for his misdeeds in India, opposed the taxation of American colonies and supported their rebellion. But his vehement opposition to the French Revolution laid him open to the charge of inconsistency, for though he thundered against the excesses of the Revolutionaries, he said nothing to condemn their oppressors whose tyranny had provoked the Revolution. This inconsistency is explained by the fact that Burke, emotional by nature, was ruled more by feeling than by reason.

Burke's fame as an orator depends not on the speeches he delivered in Parliament but on his written speeches. He was a master of written, not spoken, eloquence. Of the great prose writers he is the most elaborate, the most complete rhetorician. Johnson and Gibbon are also rhetorical, but neither of them employs rhetorical devices so systematically as Burke. The splendour of his imagery and the sonorous cadence of his periods place him in the rank of the great masters of ornate prose of the seventeenth century. The works of Burke which have won him a permanent place in English literature are his two American speeches: *On American Taxation*, and *On Conciliation with the Colonies*, and his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. The most famous and the most often quoted passage illustrating Burke's rhetoric is that on Marie Antoinette which runs as follows:

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles, and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star full of life, and splendour, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream, when she added titles of veneration to that enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness. (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*).

Thomas Paine and William Godwin, the two political writers of the last decade of the century who exercised very great influence on popular thought were extreme radicals. Burke's *Reflections On the French Revolution* called forth many replies, the most vigorous being Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791-92) whose thesis is that man doesn't need any government and that a formal government is a superfluous imposition. Paine was a demagogue, a formidable rabblouser who was a leader of the American as well as the French Revolution. He is still remembered by his famous lines—

When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

His style has little charm but it is clear, forthright, and well-adjusted to mass appeal.

Godwin is superior to Paine both as a stylist and as a philosopher, even though his philosophy is quixotic and anarchical. He had un-

bounded faith in man's perfectibility; he believed that given the right kind of education man could bring about the Utopia of his dreams. His *Political Justice* (1793) was for a time the political Bible of young enthusiasts like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt and others, though only Hazlitt remained steadfast in his faith to the end. Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* which illustrates his radical views has already been noticed. He was essentially an all-round journalist like Johnson and Goldsmith, but his histories, biographies, and other compilations are mere hack-work and call for no notice.

Philosophy

David Hume great as a historian was greater as a philosopher. His philosophy is an elaboration of Locke's materialism. He seeks to prove: (i) that there is no such thing as the soul or mind, (ii) that what we call the mind is nothing but a succession of ideas, (iii) that ideas themselves are mere impressions gained through the senses, and (iv) that there is no necessary connection between cause and effect. He denied all miracles as incapable of empirical proof—proof, that is to say, of our own experience. Hume's sceptical and destructive doctrines had the good result of stimulating Kant to build up his own system of transcendental philosophy. The interest of Hume's philosophical writings—(*An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, etc.)—for literature is that in them the gravity of philosophy is relieved by the ease, clarity, and elegance of his style.

Economics

Adam Smith, the founder of the science of Economics or Political Economy, as it was then called, was Professor of Logic and Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow. He wrote a book of moral philosophy which, however, is unimportant. He survives in literary history as the author of the *Wealth of Nations* or to give its full title, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776). Though out of date now, it was for long a classic and influenced the economic policies of the British government for almost the whole of the 19th century. The main points Smith makes in the book are (i) that the wealth of a nation does not consist in gold and silver but in the goods it produces, (ii) that the cause of the wealth is labour, (iii) that division of labour is essential for industrial growth, (iv) that free trade leads to prosperity, and (v) the Government should follow the policy of *laissez faire* (no interference) in industry.

The Wealth of Nations, however, is not merely a textbook of economics or a propaganda for free trade and *laissez faire*. It is something more than that. It is a book of political philosophy, of far-sighted statesmanship, based on moral principles which, if observed by nations, would not only make them prosperous but eliminate the many causes of friction that at present divide them. Smith condemned in the strongest terms the folly and injustice of England in restricting the trade of the American colonies in order to enlarge her own at

their expense. He foresaw a great future for America and his vision has come true. Smith's style is admirably adjusted to his great theme. It is simple, balanced, and business-like, and yet graceful and dignified.

Art

Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92), one of the great painters of the world and the greatest portrait painter of England, owes his place in literature to his *Discourses on Painting*, a series of fifteen lectures which he delivered to the students of the Royal Academy of which he was president. It was he who founded the 'Club', later called the 'Literary Club', of which Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke and others were members. The *Discourses* are said to have been corrected and improved by Johnson, but that could not have materially altered their style which must be considered to be that of Reynolds. It is simple, clear, and distinguished. The following fragments are from the first discourse. The subject is Genius and Labour.

It is indisputably evident that a great part of every man's life must be employed in collecting materials for the exercise of Genius. Invention, strictly speaking, is little more than a new combination of those images which have been previously gathered and deposited in the memory: nothing can come of nothing; he who has laid up no materials can produce no combinations.

These instructions I have ventured to offer from my own experience; but as they deviate widely from received opinions, I offer them with diffidence; and when better are suggested, shall retract them without regret. There is one precept, however, in which I shall only be opposed by the vain, the ignorant, the idle. I am not afraid that I shall repeat it too often. You must have no dependence on your own genius. If you have great talents, industry will improve them: if you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency. Nothing is denied to well-directed labour; nothing is to be obtained without it.

Law—Blackstone

Reynold's treatment of painting in a literary form is matched in the sphere of Law by Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, which have a very high place in legal literature. Considering that the exposition of technical subjects in literary style is rare in any age, the work of these two writers is specially remarkable and entitles them to an honoured place in literary history.

Theology—William Law, the Wesleys

Much of the theological controversy of the 18th century arose out of the opposition between Deism and orthodox Christianity. The stoutest champion of Christianity was William Law (1686-1761), the mystic, who as the preceptor of the Gibbon family finds an honourable mention in the historian's *Autobiography*. His *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728) is perhaps the most inspiring and influen-

tial book on religion ever produced in England. The book shows a remarkable gift of expression which no doubt accounts for its wide appeal.

The Wesley brothers, John and Charles, who started as disciples of Law but later separated and founded the Methodist Church, have also a niche in English literature. John by his prose *Journal* (1735-90) and Charles by his *Hymns*, more than six thousand in number, some of them the most poetic in the language.

Bishop Warburton and William Paley great in their day as religious controversialists on the orthodox side are now almost forgotten.

CHAPTER 31

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DRAMA

The poor quality of 18th century drama with the two exceptions of Goldsmith and Sheridan—Cause of decline—Rise of the Novel—Continued popularity of the theatre due to great actors, the most famous being Garrick—Separation between literary drama and acting drama—Imitation of French drama produced poor tragedies, the most notable being Young's *Revenge*, Addison's *Cato*, Johnson's *Irene*, Home's *Douglas*—Domestic tragedy: Lillo's *George Barnwell*—Sentimental comedy inaugurated by Steele and Cibber dominated the comic stage throughout the century—Outstanding examples of this: Colman's *Clandestine Marriage*, Kelly's *False Delicacy*, Cumberland's *West Indian*—Other comedies and farces by Mrs. Centlivre, Fielding, Foote and Garrick—Comic dramatists of the last two decades of the century: Mrs. Cowley, Colman, the younger, Morton—Goldsmith and Sheridan—Goldsmith's *The Good-natur'd Man*, *She stoops to conquer*; Sheridan's *The Rivals*, *The School for Scandal*.

The drama of the 18th century is a dull and dreary affair, and but for the two dramatists—Goldsmith and Sheridan—who redeem its drabness, there would be little justification for this chapter. The sudden decline of the drama in the 18th century and its continued eclipse till the end of the 19th has puzzled literary historians. But, however puzzling the phenomenon may seem, it is not difficult to account for it. The English drama after a continuous tradition of varying excellence for about a century and a half (1580-1720) except during the closing of the theatres during the Commonwealth period, was ousted from its place of eminence by the rival and superior attraction of the novel. For one thing, it ceased to reflect real life; for another, it lost originality and became imitative. Talented writers turned to the novel which afforded wider canvas as well as greater freedom unhampered by stage conventions.

The decline of the drama, it must be emphasised, did not mean decline of dramatic activity. It meant deterioration in quality. The theatre was as popular as before or rather more, for its profits had steadily increased during the last two hundred years. It drew huge crowds. What drew the public to the theatre, however, was not the play but the actor. The 18th century produced actors and actresses who are better known than its dramatists. How many people today

have even heard of Kelly, Colman, Cumberland, who nevertheless remember Macklin, Kemble, Mrs. Siddons and above all, Garrick? So great was Garrick's fame as actor that when he died Dr. Johnson declared that with him had passed away the gaiety of nations. People no doubt went to see *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*, but the chief attraction was Garrick as Hamlet or Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth. To the principal attraction of the actor was added another in more elaborate and spectacular costume and scenery, which diverted the attention of the audience from the quality of the play.

Garrick, who was manager of the Drury Lane Theatre for thirty years, produced many of Shakespeare's plays, but these were remodelled or adapted for the stage to suit the taste of the times. And yet this was the century of scholars like Rowe, Pope, Theobald, and Johnson, who were devoting themselves to the task of producing authentic editions of Shakespeare. Paradoxically, therefore, this enthusiastic revival of Shakespeare had little effect on the form of the new plays, which by and large followed classical rules. Voltaire who was an exile in England (1726-29) condemned Shakespeare for his ignorance of the classical rules of the drama. His influence was an important factor in turning the tide in favour of the classical French drama of Corneille and Racine in tragedy and of Moliere in comedy. The tragedies of Corneille and Racine with their strict observance of the unities were meant for a select audience and were not suited to the genius of the English people, who have always cared more for movement and variety than for long speeches and subtle psychology. English writers, even those who were convinced of Shakespeare's superiority, gave in to the pedantic fascination of the French drama. This misguided imitation of the French was more disastrous for tragedy than for comedy, which in spite of Moliere did not completely break with the native tradition.

Tragedy

An important feature of the deterioration in the drama that became apparent quite early in the century and has maintained itself ever since, was a curious separation between the literary drama and the acting drama. The literary or closet drama is good to read but unfit to act; the acting drama is good on the stage but may or may not have literary value. Poets and talented men of letters from Addison to Eliot have written for the stage, but there is not a single one of them whose plays have achieved any fame or who is ever remembered as a dramatist. How many have read Wordsworth's tragedy of the *Borderers* or Tennyson's *Queen Mary* and *Harold*, even if they have heard of them? The reason for this is that though these writers had literature, they had no sense of the stage. A successful play requires, even more than literature, knowledge of humanity and a sense of what tells on the stage.

English tragedies written in imitation of the French did not succeed. They were driven off the stage by satire, caricature, and

popular disgust. Those that still receive respectable mention in literary histories are Addison's *Cato*, Young's *Revenge*, Johnson's *Irene* and Home's *Douglas*.

Cato (1713) though without dramatic life, succeeded because of the political excitement of the time. Cato, the republican, is trapped and besieged in Utica by Julius Caesar. Finding further resistance useless, he takes his own life rather than submit to the dictator. Queen Anne was dying and the issue of succession was agitating men's minds. The Whigs stood for the house of Hanover which meant liberty, while the Tories wanted to restore the Stuarts which meant slavery. Addison himself was a Whig and the lesson of the play was plain: no sacrifice was too great for national liberty. The *Revenge* (1721) by Edward Young, the poet of *Night Thoughts*, is the only one of this group which combines literary with acting merit. Even so, it may be doubted if those who have read the *Night Thoughts*, have cared to read the play. Young was not a slavish imitator of the French, and the *Revenge* is akin to the violent tragedies of the Elizabethan era. Its plot is like that of *Othello*.

Irene (1749) produced by Johnson's pupil and friend Garrick is a fine literary piece but without acting quality. It is a series of moral dialogues between Mahomet, emperor of the Turks, his attendants, and some Greek prisoners.

The *Douglas* (1756) by John Home was very popular at the time and is perhaps the best known tragedy of the 18th century. Based on a Scottish ballad it has the romantic appeal of primitive times and local colour. Old Norval, the shepherd, brings up the infant son of Douglas to whom he gives his own name. Young Norval having saved the life of Lord Randolph is given a commission in the army. Lady Randolph discovers that the youth is her own son by her former husband Lord Douglas. Glenalvon, heir-presumptive to Lord Randolph, becomes Jealous of the new favourite and tells Lord Randolph that Lady Randolph is too familiar with the young man. As Lord Randolph and Young Norval are talking familiarly in a wood, they are surprised; being attacked, Norval slays Glenalvon, but is in turn slain by Lord Randolph, who then learns that the young man was Lady Randolph's son. The lady in utter distraction takes her own life by falling headlong from the top of a cliff. (Home was a Scottish clergyman. The publication of the play so offended the Presbyterian Church that he had to resign the ministry.)

Domestic Tragedy

More truly representative of the national spirit was the domestic or bourgeois tragedy created by Lillo and some others. George Lillo, a rich jeweller, depicted the sorrows of the middle class in his prose tragedy, *The London Merchant or The History of George Barnwell* (1731). Written in a sentimental vein and with a moral aim, it was a great success and was widely popular on the continent, having been translated into French, German, and Dutch. George Barnwell

an apprentice is seduced by a courtesan who leads him first to robbing his employer and then to murdering his own uncle, for which crime both are executed. The play is reminiscent of the Elizabethan domestic tragedies *Arden of Feversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*. Though competently written and not without touches of genuine feeling, the play did not escape the fate of the 18th century tragedy in general and was parodied and caricatured by Horace Smith and Thackeray, principally because of its affected language and style in common with the others. Lillo also wrote another domestic tragedy *Fatal Curiosity*—this in verse. An old man and his wife rob and murder a stranger staying with them only to discover that he was their son, believed to have been lost in a shipwreck.

Comedy

Comedy fared only a little better than tragedy. With the exception of Goldsmith and Sheridan, there is not a single one of the dramatists whose comedies are revived on the stage or even read today. After Collier's attack on the indecency of the Restoration stage, writers like Steele and Colly Cibber went to the other extreme and produced sentimental comedies which brought tears to the eyes and which sought to inculcate virtue. Cibber's *Careless Husband* (1704) and Steele's *Tender Husband* (1705) and *Conscious Lovers* (1722) are as good as sermons. Later and more outstanding examples of sentimental comedy were provided in the *Clandestine Marriage* (1766) of George Colman, the elder, and Garrick; *False Delicacy* (1768) of Hugh Kelly, produced by Garrick, and *The West Indian* (1771) of Richard Cumberland, also produced by Garrick.

The Clandestine Marriage is a genuine comedy which however makes a generous concession to the prevailing sentimental taste by appealing to the tender emotions. Lovewell, the clerk of Mr. Stirling, a rich London merchant, secretly marries his employer's younger daughter Fanny; and Sir John Melvil, nephew of Lord Ogleby, is engaged to the elder sister. While the two noblemen are in Stirling's house, Melvil suddenly transfers his affections from the elder Miss Stirling to the more attractive Fanny, who, embarrassed, rejects his advances. Stirling who aspires to be related to the nobility agrees to the new proposal, but his rich sister Mrs. Heidelberg resents this affront to the family and orders Fanny to be packed off from the house. In this predicament, Fanny appeals to Ogleby who, being an amorous old fop fancies she is in love with him and declares he will marry her. Matters thus becoming further complicated, Lovewell visits Fanny for consultation. The elder sister thinking that her fiance Melvil is in Fanny's room raises an alarm bringing the whole household to the door of Fanny's room. The family is scandalised to see Lovewell come out, but Fanny now reveals that they have been married four months. Lord Ogleby very generously sides with the guilty couple and appeases Stirling's fury by taking Lovewell under his own protection.

The West Indian is perhaps the most typical representative of this class. Belcour, a rich young libertine from Jamaica, returns home to London and meeting Louisa accidentally in the street falls in love with her. She is lodging along with her father, the impecunious Captain Dudley, and brother Charles, with a poor and rascally bookseller Fulmer and his wife. Mrs. Fulmer tells Belcour that Louisa is not Charles's sister but his mistress. Thus mistaking her character, Belcour makes dishonourable advances to Louisa and is challenged by Charles to a duel. The misunderstanding is cleared up at the end, and Belcour's behaviour is condoned by all as natural, and Louisa accepts his proposal of marriage.

Here is an example of Cumberland's humour. Fulmer explaining his continued poverty and bad luck to Mrs. Fulmer says:

Why, I have talked treason, writ treason, and if a man can't live by that he can live by nothing. Here I set up as a bookseller, why, men left off reading, and if I was to turn butcher, I believe, O' my conscience they'd leave off eating.

Cumberland in addition to novels and essays wrote other plays, but was not very original. He is caricatured by Sheridan as Sir Fretful Plagiary in the *Critic*. He also wrote entertaining memoirs. One of the anecdotes in the memoirs is the source of the legend that credits Dr. Johnson with drinking as many as 25 cups of tea at a sitting. He did so, according to the anecdote, to revenge himself on his hostess who had invited him for no other purpose than to talk to a parcel of people who were complete strangers to him.

Though the sentimental comedy continued to be popular throughout the century, there were other kinds side by side which kept up the spirit of the older and truer comedy.

Mrs. Centlivre, wife of the French cook to Queen Anne, kept alive the spirit of Restoration comedy in her 18 or 19 plays, the most notable being *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) which has given us the proverbial phrase 'the real Simon Pure'. Colonel Fainall is in love with Anne Lovely. To win her in marriage he has to obtain the consent of her Quaker guardian. This he does by impersonating Simon Pure, a Quaker preacher. No sooner has he obtained the guardian's consent than appears the preacher impersonated who proves himself 'the real Simon Pure'. After Mrs. Centlivre a new kind of comedy appeared in Gay's *Beggars' Opera* (1727). This was really a counterblast to the Italian opera which had become very popular with the upper classes. The success of the *Beggars' Opera* stimulated the production of comic operas and farces. A farce is a low kind of comedy, but farces which replaced formal comedy in the 18th century remained comic as well as literary. The most prominent of farce writers were Fielding, Foote, and Garrick.

Fielding wrote a good deal for the stage before he became a novelist. He began by adapting a couple of Moliere's comedies, but achieved success with his short comic pieces and farces in three Acts

in place of five. In these he made fun not only of follies and foibles but also of the literature and politics of the time. He might have succeeded in laughing out the sentimental comedy initiated by Steele, but his career as a dramatist was cut short because of an indiscretion. He wrote a skit attacking Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister, who promptly closed all the theatres except two—Covent Garden and Drury Lane—and also imposed censorship of plays by the Licensing Act of 1737. Thus suppressed, Fielding turned to the novel. As a dramatist he is remembered by his burlesque *Tom Thumb the Great or Tragedy of Tragedies* (1730) which parodies the bombastic tragedies of Young and others. Samuel Foote, an Oxford man turned comic actor, got a patent for the third theatre—the one at Hay market—and was immensely popular as a writer of farces. He was called the English Aristophanes. Garrick (1717-79), who is well known for his admirable prologues and epilogues, also wrote a number of lively farces. "The Devil is sooner raised than laid" is from his prologue to the *School for Scandal*.

Of the successful comic dramatists of the last two decades of the century those that deserve mention are Mrs. Cowley (*The Belle's Stratagem*), Mrs. Inchbald (*I'll tell you what*), Colman, the younger (*Inkle and Yarico*, *Heir-at-law*), Holcroft (*The Road to Ruin*), Morton (*Speed the Plough*, 1798). The last named play is worth remembering because it has given us Mrs. Grundy, who has become the proverbial symbol of propriety, though by a strange quirk she is erroneously taken for the universal and censorious critic. Mrs. Grundy is a neighbour of Farmer Ashfield and the obsession of Dame Ashfield who regards her as her ideal in all matters. She does not appear in the play but is only referred to by Dame Ashfield—What will Mrs Grundy say? What will Mrs Grundy think? These constant references to the neighbour's wife annoy Farmer Ashfield.

Goldsmith and Sheridan

Goldsmith and Sheridan stand quite apart from the dramatists reviewed above. They revived the spirit of genuine comedy as a counterblast to the sentimental or 'genteel' comedy in vogue in the 18th century. Both were Irish and owed their inspiration to the Restoration comedy. Goldsmith, though less witty than Sheridan, had more humour and humanity. He is thus more akin to Shakespeare than to the dramatists of the Restoration, the primary source of his inspiration.

As will have been seen from his life given above in connection with his work as an essayist, Goldsmith's plays were the efforts of his later years. *The Good-natured Man* was first offered to Garrick, then manager of the Drury Lane theatre, but as the latter objected to certain parts of the play, Goldsmith who refused to make any changes offered it to Colman, the elder, who had just become manager of the rival theatre at Covent Garden. It was produced there in January 1768. The comic scene of the bailiffs was condemned

as low or vulgar by the 'genteel' audience and was accordingly cut out, though restored in the printed edition. It was blessed by Dr. Johnson whose recommendation went a long way in ensuring the success of the play. Goldsmith aimed at 'nature and humour, in whatever walks of life they were most conspicuous'. The bailiffs scene is both natural and humorous, though condemned by the fashionable audience of the day. The three chief characters Honeywood, Croaker, and Lofty are also true to life. The character of Honeywood is obviously drawn from Goldsmith's own weaknesses. Croaker, the professional pessimist, who always looks at the dark side of things is Benjonsonian in his 'humour'. Lofty, a self-important government official who professes to dispense patronage right and left is a well-known type popularly known in this country as *Dhaporeshankh*.

The Good-natur'd Man. The main plot is concerned with the affairs of Mr. Honeywood, a warm-hearted, generous simpleton who gives away his money indiscriminately to all who seek his help, with the result that he runs into debt and is unable to pay his creditors. His uncle, Sir William Honeywood, decides to teach him a lesson by having him arrested for debt. The bailiffs are in the house, but he is rescued by Miss Richland, a rich heiress, who loves him. Honeywood too loves her, but is too diffident to propose. Believing that he owes his release to Lofty, an imposter, he even pleads the latter's suit for her hand in marriage. His eyes are, however, opened to his folly in practising universal benevolence when his uncle exposes Lofty and reveals that his real benefactor is Miss Richland. Honeywood and Richland are united.

The sub-plot is the love affair of Leontine and Olivia. Leontine, the son of Croaker, an extremely gloomy merchant and guardian of Miss Richland, is sent to Lyons to fetch his sister who has been living there with her aunt for ten years. Instead, he brings back Olivia, a young lady of fortune, with whom he has fallen in love and who personates his sister. The deception succeeds for a time until Croaker insists on Leontine's proposing marriage to Miss Richland, his motive being to secure her fortune for his family. To avoid suspicion the son obeys, believing Miss Richland would refuse him. She, however, knowing the secret of Olivia, out of sheer mischief accepts the proposal. Faced with this complication, Leontine and Olivia decide upon a Gretna Green marriage and plan to escape. Their plan is foiled and Sir William Honeywood intervenes to obtain Croaker's consent to their marriage.

The Stoops to Conquer. Though rich in both nature and humour, *The Good-natur'd Man* was only a modest success and was almost eclipsed by its successor *She Stoops to Conquer* produced at Covent Garden in 1773. It was an instant and immense success and has maintained its popularity ever since, specially on the amateur stage in Schools and Colleges.

Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle, an elderly couple living in the country

have a daughter, Kate. Mr. Hardcastle wants to marry her to Marlow, the son of his friend Sir Charles Marlow. Mrs. Hardcastle wants Tony, her son by a previous marriage, to marry her niece, Constance Neville, because by this means she would be able to secure her jewellery for the family. Tony, however, loves a country girl, Bet Bouncer, and would have nothing to do with his cousin who is in love with Hastings, a young man in London.

Marlow and Hastings set out from London on a visit to the Hardcastles, but lose their way. Arriving after dark at the 'Three Jolly Pigeons' which is given out as full up, they ask to be directed to another inn. Tony who is enjoying himself with his low companions mischievously directs them to the Hardcastle's house. Arriving there and taking Mr. Hardcastle for the innkeeper Marlow orders him about much to the host's puzzlement. With Kate, however, he is too shy even to look at her face. Discovering that the visitors have mistaken the house for an inn she decides to win by stooping to play the role of a barmaid. To her surprise Marlow becomes a different person altogether and makes violent love to her. She, however, keeps him off.

While this hide-and-seek is going on between Kate and Marlow, Constance and Hastings are planning an elopement with the active cooperation of Tony who is only too anxious to get rid of his cousin. While Tony is trying to read Hastings's letter to her, his mother arrives, and since he, almost illiterate, can't make out the contents, she seizes the letter and discovers the elopement plan. She at once decides to carry off Miss Neville to her aunt Pedigree's, and Tony offers to drive them. Taking advantage of the night he drives them round and round, landing them at the bottom of the garden where Hastings is waiting. Tony's hoax is discovered by Mr. Hardcastle, and the arrival of Sir Charles Marlow just then clears up the complications. Kate comes to understand the contradictory behaviour of Marlow and accepts him. Tony believed by his mother to be under age is declared by Mr. Hardcastle to have been of age 'these three months'. He is thus free to marry whomsoever he chooses. His choice being Bet Bouncer, Miss Neville is free to marry Hastings. The play ends happily for all except Mrs. Hardcastle whose complete discomfiture satisfies the demands of comic poetic justice.

The initial incident—mistaking the Hardcastles' house for an inn—is said to have been based on an actual experience of Goldsmith's in his boyhood. Whether fact or fiction, it provides that element of romance which is an integral part of every one of Shakespeare's comedies. In plot, construction, dialogue, and above all, characterisation, *She Stoops* is as perfect a thing outside Shakespeare as can be. The star character, Tony Lumpkin—a bundle of mischief and cunning—is immortal.

Sheridan (1751-1816)

Goldsmith, great as he was as a dramatist, was surpassed by Sheridan, who is rightly regarded as the greatest and most popular

writer of English Comedy after Shakespeare. Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin and educated at Harrow. His father, actor and teacher of elocution, was a friend and butt of Johnson, and his mother was a novelist. His parents having removed to Bath, he became acquainted with the family of the composer Linley and married his daughter Elizabeth Linley noted for her beauty and singing, after a romantic courtship and fighting two duels with a Major Matthews, her pursuer. He settled in London and turned to the stage to support his extravagant style of living. His first play *The Rivals* was produced at Covent Garden in 1775 when he was only 24. In the same year were played *St. Patrick's Day*, a poor farce, and the more successful *The Duenna*, a comic opera. In 1776 he bought from Garrick the patent of the Drury Lane Theatre which he owned and managed till its destruction by fire in 1809. Here in 1777 he produced *A Trip to Scarborough* (an adaptation of Vanbrugh's *Relapse*) and *The School for Scandal*. His famous farce *The Critic* was produced in 1779 and his last play *Pizarro* (adapted from a German tragedy) in 1799.

In 1780 he was elected to Parliament where he joined the Whig opposition as a staunch supporter of Fox. Famous as an orator, he held office in the Government and took a prominent part in the impeachment of Warren Hastings. In his first speech against Hastings, lasting six hours, he drew such a lurid picture of the atrocities committed on the Begums of Oudh that several ladies, including Mrs. Sheridan, fainted and had to be removed from the galleries. A dashing figure, notorious for his extravagant and dissipated living, he was a fearless and conscientious politician, and was extremely popular in society, being a member of Johnson's Club and a friend of the Prince of Wales and other Royal dukes. His first wife having died in 1792, he married again in 1795. The burning down of his new theatre in 1809 ruined him financially and the loss of his parliamentary seat in 1812 ended his political career. He died a ruined man but was given a splendid funeral in the Westminster Abbey.

It will be seen that if we except the late *Pizarro*, all Sheridan's plays were written before he was thirty. The two most popular and often revived on the stage, both professional and amateur, are *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*. Of the remaining, *St. Patrick's Day* can be dismissed as of little account; the others are only a little below Sheridan's best.

The Rivals, his very first play, proclaimed Sheridan a born dramatist. In theatrical technique, in plot construction, in the sense of human comedy, and above all in the dialogue, it shows a degree of maturity that is astonishing in one so young and inexperienced. We can see his comic ideal in the blend of 'humours' of Ben Jonson and the wit of the Restoration Comedy divested of its coarseness. The characters are alive not only on the stage, but also off it, at least some of them. Who can forget Mrs. Malaprop's 'Allegory on the banks of Nile' or her 'nice derangement of epitaphs'? She

reminds us of Mrs. Jenkins in *Humphrey Clinker*, but is a vast improvement upon that domestic. The imperious and irascible Sir Anthony Absolute, who demands absolute and unquestioning obedience from his son, is similarly reminiscent of Mr. Bramble in the same novel. This is not to suggest that these characters are borrowed, for Sheridan's inventiveness is unquestioned. In the character of the trigger-happy Sir Lucius, Sheridan was certainly having a good-humored laugh at his countrymen, though we may well believe his avowal that he did not intend any national reflection. Lydia Languish is typical as well as individual. She is so steeped in romantic fiction that she would not marry without braving the hazards of an elopement and that too with an impecunious lover. Bob Acres, though an arrant coward, is more remarkable for his buoyancy, manifested specially in his striking and colourful oaths: "Odds whips and wheels"! "Odds blushes and blooms"! "Odds Jigs and tabours!" "Odds fire and fury!" "Odds bullets!" "Odds Wrinkles!" The Julia Faulkland scenes are a stumbling block to many. The lovers are very boring and their slushy sentiment is exasperating. But it is obvious that this subplot was designed to ridicule the sentimental nonsense of the run-of-the-mill comedy Sheridan was attacking.

The only defect that could be legitimately pointed out is that the dialogue is too consistently brilliant. The servants are quite as witty as their masters. But then even Homer nods, and this was Sheridan's first play. Moreover, however incongruous the servants' breezy and polished talk may appear, there's no denying that it adds to the zest and vigour of the play, which takes its place alongside of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* minus, of course, their poetry.

The Rivals. Captain Absolute (alias Beverley), Bob Acres, and Sir Lucius O' Trigger, are rivals for the hand of the rich heiress Lydia Languish, the niece of Mrs. Malaprop. As Lydia is too romantic to be satisfied with a humdrum marriage to the son of a rich baronet, Sir Anthony Absolute, Captain Absolute (the said son) courts her in the character of poor Ensign Beverley and is accepted. Mrs. Malaprop takes a fancy to Sir Lucius and writes him love letters (signing herself Delia) which he believes are from Miss Languish. Bob Acres is instigated by the fiery Sir Lucius to challenge Beverley to a duel. At the same time, since Captain Absolute is his rival too, Sir Lucius challenges him. When Bob Acres discovers that Beverley is no other than his friend Capt. Absolute, he refuses to fight and resigns all claims to Lydia. Sir Lucius would now fight Capt. Absolute on his own account, but the sudden arrival of Mrs. Malaprop and party clears up the misunderstanding, and he is disillusioned to find that his Delia is not Miss Languish but her aunt. Lydia after scolding her lover for shattering her hopes of an elopement forgives him. There is a sentimental by-plot in the love affairs of Julia and Faulkland in which Faulkland makes an ass of himself by his perverse jealousy in doubting the constancy of Julia.

The School for Scandal. The 'school' in the play is the scandal

club consisting of Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, and Sir Benjamin Back-bite. Their favourite pastime is character assassination by inventing, talking, and spreading scandalous stories. Against this background is unfolded the main plot which concerns the contrasted characters of two brothers Joseph Surface and Charles Surface. Joseph is a hypocrite who mouths sentiments, while Charles is a generous-hearted, reckless spend-thrift. Charles loves Maria, the ward of Sir Peter Teazle, and his love is reciprocated. Joseph courts her for her fortune, and at the same time makes love to Lady Teazle in order to enlist her support in his suit to Maria. Mrs. Sneerwell who has a passion for Charles plants, by her scheming, a suspicion in Sir Peter's mind that there is an attachment between Charles and Lady Teazle. As Sir Peter an old man, has married his young wife only recently, he is only too prone to believe the story. Such is the situation when Sir Oliver Surface, the brothers' rich uncle returns unexpectedly from India, but decides to test their character before revealing himself. He visits Charles in the character of a money-lender to whom Charles sells all the family pictures except that of Sir Oliver which he refuses to part with at any price. This wins the uncle's heart. Meanwhile, Lady Teazle visits Joseph in his library where he attempts by sophistry to seduce her. The sudden arrival of Sir Peter forces Lady Teazle to hide herself behind a screen. Though suspecting her loyalty, Sir Peter tells Joseph that he has made a handsome settlement on her, which makes Lady Teazle ashamed of herself. At this point Charles arrives, and Sir Peter hurrying to hide himself behind the screen, sees a petticoat. Joseph thus caught says "'tis a little French milliner". Sir Peter thereupon goes into the closet. The conversation between the brothers convinces him that Charles is innocent and that his suspicions about him and Lady Teazle are unfounded. Charles is on the point of revealing the love exchanges between Joseph and Lady Teazle when Joseph fearing exposure tells him that Sir Peter is in the closet and has heard all their conversation. Charles pulls out Sir Peter who apologises for his suspicion, and to reward him with a good laugh at Joseph tells him that there is a girl behind the screen. Charles throws down the screen revealing Lady Teazle. She exposes the villainy of Joseph and his insidious attempt to seduce her. Immediately after this revelation Sir Oliver visits Joseph in the character of an old relative in need of help which he refuses on the ground of his uncle's misdeeds, forgetting the generous gifts he had received from him. His exposure as a sentimental knave is complete. Every misunderstanding cleared up, Charles and Maria are united, and Sir Peter is reconciled to Lady Teazle.

BOOK SEVEN

NINETEENTH CENTURY

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

Sovereigns: George III (1760-1820), George IV (1820-30), William IV (1830-37), Victoria (1837-1901).

The political and social history of the 19th century may be summed up in two key-words: democracy and reform. The political history of the period is one of transition from aristocratic rule to democracy. The stages of this transition were the Reform Bills of 1832, 1867 and 1884 by which political power ceased to be the monopoly of the landed gentry and passed to the people. The Parliament having become genuinely representative of the nation set itself the task of passing legislative measures designed to remove the grievances of the people and improve their social and economic condition. (As a result of the Industrial Revolution, England had become 'the workshop of the world'. The victories of Trafalgar and Waterloo had made her mistress of the seas, which enabled her to carry on a vast foreign trade. Her machinery and manufactures together with her virtual monopoly of the carrying trade made her the richest country of the world. She had also during the century built up a large colonial empire comprising India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Except for the Crimean war in the middle of the century and the Boer War at its end, England had only minor involvements in foreign disputes, and thus enjoyed internal peace and external security for a hundred years after Waterloo till the Great War of 1914-18. Peace and prosperity were important factors that made large scale social and economic reforms possible.)

(The early years of the 19th century were marked by great social unrest as a direct result of the Industrial Revolution. Mass production by factories had led to enormous increase in wealth, but it was concentrated in the hands of the capitalists, who were indifferent to the welfare of the factory labourer. Low wages in

return for sixteen hours of work in unhealthy factories, and living in over-crowded slums in horrible filth and squalor, with no leisure or recreation—such was the hideous condition of the wage-earner. Women and even children were employed in mines and factories and mercilessly exploited. The condition of the farm labourer was no better. Small or Cottage industries of the village having been destroyed, he was deprived of the only source by which he had supplemented his poor wages. Many of the labourers, both urban and rural, became paupers. The landlords sought to relieve their poverty by devising a system of aid from rates (or local taxes). In other words, instead of compelling the factory owners and farmers to increase the wages, the authorities shifted the burden on to the tax-payer. Apart from this inequity, the remedy was worse than the disease, for the 'dole' degraded the labour by discouraging hard work, thrift, and self-help. To make matters worse, in 1815 was passed the Corn Law, which prohibited import of foreign corn in order to protect home agricultural depression after the end of the Napoleonic War. Factories closed, labourers were thrown out of work and prices of bread soared. The cup of labourers' misery was full.

All this plainly called for reform. Reform, indeed, should have come earlier, but as we have seen, it was postponed, because the English people were too pre-occupied with the war with Napoleon to care much for reform at home. Even after the end of that war the Tory Government (under Lord Liverpool, 1812-27) was afraid of reform. The Tories thought all reformers were revolutionaries who might repeat in England the horrible things that had been done in France. So they put down all radical agitation for political reform with a heavy hand. The 'Peterloo massacre' (1819) was the most brutal instance of the government's policy of repression. An open-air meeting of working men and women at St. Peter's Fields outside Manchester was charged by mounted troops killing about a dozen people and injuring many others. Soon after this in sheer panic the Government passed a series of repressive measures known as the 'Six Acts' prohibiting all meetings, demonstrations, seditious speeches and writings. This repressive policy was largely due to the Foreign Minister Castlereagh, who came to be so hated that when he died (1822) his funeral procession was cheered by the London mob.

George III died in 1820 and his eldest son who had been Regent during his father's long illness, and latterly, insanity, ascended the throne as George IV. He was notorious for loose-living and the morals of Regency court were a by-word for profligacy. Though not much was expected of him, some steps towards reform were taken during his reign. The Tory administration of the Duke of Wellington (P.M. 1828-30) under mounting pressure of public opinion abolished the Test Act (1828) which barred Catholics and non-Conformist Protestants from Government service. In 1829 a more important surrender was made when the Tories passed the

Catholic Emancipation Act which removed the restriction against the Catholics sitting in Parliament. Less spectacular but more humanitarian was the reform in the Penal Code (1828) by which death sentence for theft, felony, and a hundred petty offences was abolished. It is now reserved only for murder and treason.

George IV died in 1830 and was succeeded by his brother, Duke of Clarence, as William IV 'the sailor king', so called because he had been in the Navy. In the same year took place the bloodless July Revolution in France which drove away the reactionary Charles X (1824-30) (younger brother of Louis XVI and Louis XVIII) and put Louis Phillipe,¹ 'the citizen king' on the throne as a constitutional monarch. This event lent a fresh impetus to the movement for parliamentary reform in England. The Tories who had ruled England for nearly 50 years were replaced by the Whigs, who under the leadership of Lord Grey passed the Great Reform Bill of 1832, but only after a bitter struggle with the king and Tories. The Bill having passed the Commons had been at first rejected by the Lords. This made the people furious. Ducal castles were burnt down and high officials had to hide themselves to escape mob fury. When the king saw that there was danger of a revolution, he accepted Grey's advice to create enough Whig peers to secure a majority in the Lords in favour of the Bill. The threat succeeded. The Lords yielded and passed the Bill. This measure at one stroke put an end to the 'pocket' boroughs and 'rotten' boroughs which had hitherto enabled the aristocracy to fill Parliament with members of their own choice. It extended the franchise to the new middle class of manufacturers and merchants, but left out the working class. So a new movement that of the 'Chartists' (1838-48) was started which demanded for the working class the same enfranchisement as had been granted to the middle class. A charter embodying their demands was presented to Parliament but was rejected. It was not until the passing of the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884 that the working classes got the vote and England became a real democracy.

The Reform Bill of 1832 was a turning point in British political history. It marked the close of the old aristocratic order and the beginning of a new order of democracy and social equality. It cleared the way for all kinds of reform which followed in quick succession in the reigns of William IV and Queen Victoria. The following reforming measures were passed by Grey's Ministry.

(1) (Slavery) Emancipation Act, abolishing slavery throughout the British Empire (1833).

(2) Factory Act (1833) which prohibited the employment of very young children and reduced the working hours of women and older children (boys 10 years up and girls 13 years up). Several other Factory Acts were to follow; that of 1847 reduced the hours of men.

¹Cousin of Louis XVI; he had sided with the Revolutionists.

(3) The Education Act (1833) which made an annual grant for the elementary education of the poor.

Grey resigned in 1834 and his successor Lord Melbourne (1834-41) continued the good work begun by him, and carried the following legislation:

(1) The Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) which ended the system of 'doles' to the paupers and provided better methods of relief through workhouses.

(2) The Municipal Corporations Act (1835) which created autonomous (self-governing) local bodies with powers to levy taxes for providing all kinds of social services—roads, trams, gas, light, sanitation, hospitals, libraries, parks, museums, etc. The Act covered only the larger towns. The small towns and the countryside got their corresponding County Councils and Parish Councils much later in 1888 and 1894.

William IV died issueless and so Victoria, daughter of the Duke of Kent, ascended the throne in 1837. She was only 18 at the time, but grew up to be a most correct and understanding constitutional monarch under the tactful political training of Lord Melbourne. The last beneficent measure of Melbourne's Ministry was the introduction throughout Great Britain of a uniform penny postage (1839).

The numerous reforms carried out in Victoria's reign are connected with two great Parliamentary leaders: Peel and Gladstone. The two other great leaders, Palmerston and Disraeli, distinguished themselves in foreign politics rather than in reforms.

Peel. Sir Robert Peel was a Tory but had liberal sympathies and may be said to be the father of the later Conservative party. As Home Secretary in the Tory Government, first under Lord Liverpool and then under Wellington, he had distinguished himself by reforming the Penal Code, abolishing the Test Act, and passing the Catholic Emancipation Act. He had also organised a civil police force for London, the first of its kind in Britain. The force became so popular that a policeman was endearingly called 'Bobby' after Peel's first name. He was also called a 'top' from the copper buttons on his uniform.

He became Prime Minister in 1841 on the resignation of Lord Melbourne. In this capacity his most notable contribution to reform was the repeal of the Corn Law of 1815. By prohibiting the import of foreign corn this law had raised the price of bread, causing great distress to the poor. Agitation for the repeal of this law by the *Anti-Corn Law League* under the leadership of Cobden and Bright (both manufacturers) had little effect. Matters came to a head in 1845-46 on the total failure of the potato crop in Ireland. Potato being the staple diet of the Irish, the country was faced with famine and starvation. Though Peel was pledged to his party not to repeal the law, he was compelled to do it to save the Irish from perishing. This caused a split in the Tory party, and Peel carried the measure only

with the support of more than half of Whigs. This break-up across party lines led to the emergence of *Liberals* and *Conservatives*. The abolition of the Corn Law (1846) led to Free Trade. But even its repeal failed to mitigate the suffering of the people. They resorted to violence and crime, and Peel had to bring in a Coercion Bill. This, however, was defeated and Peel resigned in 1846.

Palmerston. Lord Palmerston, though nominally a Whig was not a party man and often drew support from his opponents. He was Foreign Minister under the Whig government of Lord Grey (1830-34), Lord Melbourne (1834-41), and Lord John Russell (1846-51). Because of his dictatorial methods in foreign affairs he was often in difficulties with the Queen and his colleagues. He was dismissed by the Queen (1851) because he had conveyed to Louis Napoleon his approval of the *Coup* by which he had made himself permanent President of France (1851). But he was so indispensable that soon after he became a minister again in Aberdeen's Government (1852). As, however, the Queen won't have him in the Foreign office, he became Home Minister. When the Aberdeen government resigned in consequence of its mismanagement of the Crimean War, Palmerston became Prime Minister for the first time (1855-58) and again in 1859-65.

He was a 'Jingo' (a fighting politician), and was very sensitive about British prestige abroad. A Chinese vessel had attacked another Chinese vessel flying the British flag. The Chinese had no right to fly the British flag, but no harm had been done to British interests. Palmerston, however, thought that the British flag had been insulted and went to war with China (the Second Chinese War, 1856-58). He was so loved and esteemed that he was supported by his countrymen even in this eccentric proceeding. Though a supporter of all movements for nationalism and liberty on the continent (see under Foreign Affairs), he was opposed to all reforms at home. Thus, no reforming measures were passed while he was Prime Minister. After his death in 1865 the labels Whig and Tory disappear giving place to Liberal and Conservative.

Disraeli. A Jew by birth, Benjamin Disraeli began his career as a writer of political novels. Entering Parliament in 1837 he soon became leader of the Conservatives. A far-sighted statesman, he decided to 'educate his party' into accepting the changed conditions and the need for reforms. By giving it this democratic orientation he made the conservative party a great force in British politics. As Lord Chancellor in Lord Derby's third government, he stole his opponents' thunder by passing the Second Reform Bill (1867) which extended the franchise to the working classes in towns. He became Prime Minister for the first time next year, but had to resign after a few months, Gladstone taking over. After Gladstone's first Ministry he returned to power in 1874 and was Prime Minister till 1880. His real interest was foreign politics in which he distinguished himself by astute diplomacy. He was an Imperialist and did not hesitate to risk war to extend the British empire or maintain British prestige

abroad. In the Turko-Russian War (1875-78) over the Balkans, he effectively intervened on behalf of Turkey and checked Russian designs in the East. Another master stroke of his policy was his purchase of four million pounds worth of the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal, which secured for Britain virtual control in its management and ultimately led to British dominance in Egypt.

Gladstone, the greatest name in British politics of the Victorian era, was four times Prime Minister (1868-74, 1880-85, 1886, 1892-94). He was good at finance and was Chancellor of the Exchequer under Palmerston. He was a radical liberal and is famous for making wide-ranging reforms. The most important of these were the following:

(1) The Education Act of 1870 which established a national system of primary education.

(2) The Ballot Act which secured secrecy of the vote.

(3) The Irish Land Act which improved the lot of the Irish peasants.

(4) Army Reform. This measure abolished the system of buying commissions and promotions in the army.

(5) Disestablishment of the Irish Protestant Church. This meant that the Protestant church would no longer be maintained at the expense of the Irish Government. Ireland being a Catholic country, maintenance of the Protestant minority Church was an inequitable burden on her exchequer.

(6) The Universities were opened to all men regardless of their creed.

(7) The system of open competitive examination for civil service was introduced.

(8) The Third Reform Bill of 1884, which extended the franchise to the agricultural labourers.

Gladstone became unpopular because of his weak Foreign policy and his espousing the cause of Irish Home Rule. He made two attempts to pass the Home Rule Bill, first in his third Ministry and then in the fourth, but failed, because the imperial sentiment was too strong for the country to accept such a measure. He was opposed by many of his own party-men, and they broke away to form a separate group under the name of *Liberal Unionists*. The party also lost the ablest of its young radicals, Joseph Chamberlain, who joined the Conservatives.

Gladstone having wrecked the Liberal party over the Home Rule issue the Conservatives came to power and in alliance with Liberal Unionists ruled England for twenty years (1886-1906), except for a brief spell (1892-95) of Liberal government first under Gladstone and then on his resigning (1894) under Lord Rosebery. The Conservative government was headed by Lord Salisbury, assisted by such men of outstanding ability as Balfour (his nephew), Chamberlain, and Lord Randolph Churchill (father of Sir Winston Churchill).

Of these, Churchill's career was cut short by a quarrel with his chief over Army and Naval budgets. Salisbury was an old fashioned traditional Tory and was opposed to reform. The only important reform of his Ministry was (Balfour's) Education Act of 1902, which improved and enlarged secondary education. During the last two decades of the century, interest had shifted from the home front to Asia and Africa. Troubles in South Africa and Egypt which had been indifferently handled by Gladstone were successfully terminated by Salisbury's Government under which there was marked development of imperialism largely through the influence of Chamberlain. Salisbury resigned (1902) after the end of the Boer War, and was succeeded as Premier by Balfour.

Queen Victoria died in 1901 after the longest reign in British history and over an empire on which the sun never set. The purity, simplicity, and dignity of her private life as a wife and mother together with the constitutional propriety with which she conducted herself as a sovereign had won her great respect and affection in the hearts of her subjects. This was manifested by her two Jubilees in 1887 and 1897 in which people from all parts of the Empire participated. In spite of the growing democratic tradition the Monarchy at the end of the century was more popular than it ever had been and was regarded as the sole bond of union between the various parts of the Empire.

Foreign Affairs

British foreign politics is best viewed against the background of contemporary Europe. After Napoleon's overthrow the diplomats of Europe assembled at a Congress at Vienna to resettle the boundaries of Europe (November 1814—June 1815). In doing this they took no account of the principles of nationality and democracy which the French Revolution had implanted in the minds of the people everywhere in Europe. The principle followed was restoration of the old order without sufficient regard to the wishes of the people concerned. The hated Bourbon monarchy was restored in France in the person of Louis XVIII, younger brother of Louis XVI.³

Belgium was joined to Holland under Dutch rule in spite of strong differences of race, religion and language. Norway was joined to Sweden. Reactionary and unpopular kings were restored in Spain, Portugal and Southern Italy (the kingdom of Naples). Poland was wiped off the map of Europe, being partitioned between Russia and Prussia. Austria received Lombardy and Venetia besides a general controlling power over the rest of the Italian states. Germany which had hitherto consisted of more than two hundred provinces was formed into a loose confederation of thirty-nine practically independent states under the leadership of Austria. Thus two great nations—Italy and Germany—remained split. The only country that

³Louis XVII was the title given to the son of Louis XVI but he never reigned and died as a prisoner.

got a fair deal was Switzerland. Her loose confederation was restored and her neutrality and independence were recognised by the Great Powers.

These settlements were manifestly unfair and caused much bitterness and unrest, and the subsequent history of 19th century Europe is largely a history of undoing this mischief.

Russia, Prussia, Austria and France formed what they called the *Holy Alliance* by which they agreed to maintain good relations among the peoples of Europe by acting on the Christian principles of justice, charity and peace. The real object of the Alliance, however, it soon became clear, was the unholy one of suppressing popular liberties. The most active promoter of despotic rule was Metternich, the Prime Minister of Austria. Ruling Austria despotically himself, he encouraged the other great powers to follow his example. As they were all despots they were only too willing to do this and readily combined to put down all revolts of discontented peoples everywhere in Europe. During the twenties the people of Spain, Portugal, and Southern Italy rebelled against the reactionary Kings that had been foisted on them by the Congress of Vienna; and the *Holy Alliance* hastened to crush the rebels. In the late twenties when the Spanish and Portuguese thrones became vacant, it was mainly through the intervention of Britain that they came to be occupied by the rightful constitutional monarchs—both queens.

There were two revolutions in Europe, first in 1830 and then in 1848. The first started in France. The French revolted against the reactionary Charles X (July 1830) who had succeeded his elder brother Louis XVIII in 1824. Charles abdicated and was succeeded by Louis Philippe, cousin of Louis XVI. The French favoured him as 'the citizen king' because he had taken the popular side in the French Revolution. This bloodless 'July Revolution' had repercussions in many other countries of Europe—Belgium, Germany, Poland, Italy—but except in Belgium the revolts were unsuccessful. The religious hostility between Catholic Belgium and Protestant Holland was the chief cause of Belgium's revolt against the Dutch King, and it succeeded because of the strong support Britain gave to the Belgian cause. In the end Belgium became a separate kingdom under the Anglo-German Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg (1831).

Again in 1848 revolutions broke out all over Europe almost simultaneously. In Austria, Metternich was overthrown and had to flee the country. In Germany, an attempt at unification was made by the confederation's offering the crown of united Germany to the king of Prussia, but he rejected the offer because he did not feel strong enough yet to resist Austria. The revolution in France was the most successful of all. The French favoured an ambitious foreign policy and were disgusted with the dull regime of Louis Philippe whose policy was peace at any price. So they deposed him and set up a republic (Second Republic) with Louis Napoleon (nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte) as President. Three years later in 1851 he became permanent President and in 1852 declared himself

Emperor Napoleon III. The revolution in Italy was easily suppressed by Austria.

Unification of Italy. Though the Italian revolts of 1830 and 1848 had been crushed, the spirit of unity which the French Revolution had infused into the minds of Italians proved much too strong to be suppressed for long. They revolted against Austrian despotism (1859-60), and though Britain gave them only moral support, and Napoleon III betrayed them, they succeeded after a protracted struggle chiefly through the patriotic zeal of Mazzini, Garibaldi and Cavour. The stirring writings of Mazzini, the heroic exploits of Garibaldi and his 'Red Shirts', and the 'tactful diplomacy' of Count Cavour finally led to the unification and independence of Italy in 1870.

Unification of Germany. The unification of Germany was an equally long process. At the end of Napoleonic Wars Prussia had emerged as a rival of Austria for the leadership of Germany, but the weakness of the German confederation and the despotic rule of Metternich prevented her from asserting herself. The revolution of 1830 produced only a mild stir and that of 1848 overthrew Metternich who had ruled Austria for nearly 40 years. The revolutions had, however, quickened the sense of German nationalism and German unity and emphasised the need of Prussian leadership. The opportunity came when William I ascended the throne of Prussia in 1861 and took Bismarck as his Prime Minister. Bismarck, the iron man of Europe, saw that German unity could be achieved only through war. So he built up a huge and efficient army and in collaboration with Austria attacked Denmark in 1864. The combined German and Austrian armies defeated Denmark and captured the Danish provinces of Schleswig and Holstein. Two years later Bismarck provoked a war with Austria over the division of the spoils. In this "Three Weeks' War" Austria was completely defeated (1866). The Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were incorporated in Prussia and the North German Confederation was formed comprising 22 states under the leadership of the Prussian king. As the remaining states held aloof, Bismarck realized that another war, this time with France, would be necessary to bring them under Prussian hegemony; so he picked a quarrel with Napoleon III over the question of Spanish crown which was offered to a relation of the Prussian king. In the ensuing Franco-Prussian war the southern German States joined Prussia and the combined German army inflicted a crushing and most humiliating defeat on the French at Sedan (1870). Napoleon III was captured and deposed; the 2nd French Empire came to an end, giving place (1871) to the Third French Republic (The third Republic lasted till 1940 when France was conquered by the Nazis). The crisis of war and resulting victory brought all Germans under the Prussian flag; the Confederation became the German Empire under the King of Prussia who thus became Emperor of Germany (January 1871).

Britain and the Continent

Canning. Britain's foreign policy was, on the whole, one of peace. Her chief interests were trade and development of her empire, and so she kept aloof from continental entanglements. Castlereagh who represented Britain at the Congress of Vienna refused to join the *Holy Alliance*. British statesmen were sympathetic to the feelings of freedom and nationalism that prompted the revolutions of 1830 and 1848, but they did not like to interfere in the internal affairs of others. They were, however, firm in asserting themselves wherever British interests or inclinations were involved. When the Greeks revolted (1820-29) against Turkish rule, Canning, British Foreign Minister, supported the cause of Greek independence from political as well as cultural motives. He allowed British volunteers to enlist in the Greek army, the most famous being Lord Byron who died fighting in the Greek cause. Even though there was no 'official' intervention, the British fleet joined the Russian and French fleets in completely destroying the Turkish fleet at Navarino (1827), which ultimately led to Greek independence (1829). Canning was also largely instrumental in securing the independence of the Spanish colonies of central and south America. When these colonies revolted against the mother country, and the *Holy Alliance* wanted to intervene, Canning made it clear that no European power could cross the Atlantic without running the gauntlet of the British fleet. By a happy coincidence President Monroe of U.S.A. promulgated the famous 'Monroe Doctrine' that no European power could acquire new territories in America (1823). There was, of course, no question of preventing Spain fighting the rebels, but Spain had enough trouble with the Constitutionalists at home and could not cope with the trans-Atlantic revolt. The net result was that the revolutionaries under Bolivar won and Britain recognised the independence of central and South America. This was a master stroke of policy, for it opened the way to British trade with South America which Spain had always blocked.

Palmerston. Even more vigorous was the foreign policy of Palmerston. He not only helped Belgium to gain her independence (1831) but also secured her neutrality, which was guaranteed by a treaty signed by the great powers (1839). Britain thus secured across the channel a friendly power of great strategic importance. In the early thirties Palmerston helped the constitutionalists or liberals in Spain and Portugal in the disputes over succession to the thrones by his active opposition to the reactionaries. Turkey was so weak that her empire was in danger of breaking up. Mohammad Ali, the Sultan's viceroy in Egypt, rebelled, overran Syria, and wanted to make himself an independent ruler of Egypt. In this he was encouraged by France who expected to control Egypt through him. The break-up of Turkey was against British interests and Palmerston's military intervention (in collaboration with Russia and Austria) brought Mohammad Ali to his knees and foiled French ambitions in Egypt.

In the Crimean War (1854-56) the main parties were Russia and

Turkey. The cause of the war was a trivial dispute about the possession of certain holy places in Jerusalem (then in Turkish empire) between the Greek or Orthodox church and the Roman catholic church. Russian church being Greek, Russia supported the claims of the Greek church and catholic France those of the Catholic. Turkey was willing to concede the Catholic claim. This angered Russia who demanded a general protectorate (protectorship) over all Christians in the Turkish empire. This demand was rejected by Turkey, upon which Russia declared war upon her. England and France joined Turkey and defeated Russia. England's traditional policy of befriending Turkey as against Russia (reversed more by accident than design in the case of Greek independence) was due not to her love of Turkey but to her fear of Russian designs in the East.

Lord Palmerston was equally firm in handling another great crisis of his regime—the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The East India Company was dissolved and the government of India passed to the crown. When, however, the Italians revolted against Austrian despotism (1859-60), Palmerston gave them only moral support.

Disraeli. In the Russo-Turkish War (1875-78) Britain again sided with Turkey. Some of the Balkan states had revolted against Turkish rule and appealed to the great powers to come to their help. Russia, the traditional supporter of Balkan Christians, moved quickly before other powers could make up their minds. She defeated Turkey and obtained extensive territories in the Balkans by the treaty of San Stephano. It was at this stage that Disraeli intervened, for this treaty went against British interests. He called upon Russia to submit the treaty to a European Congress for discussion, and backed his demand by sending a fleet to Constantinople in Turkey's defence. This militancy had the desired effect. Russia yielded and a congress was held at Berlin under the presidency of Bismarck. The result was the Treaty of Berlin (1878), which virtually annulled the original treaty by giving back to Turkey most of the territories appropriated by Russia. In the bargain Britain got Cyprus, an outpost for the protection of her interests in the East. The Treaty of Berlin was a great diplomatic triumph for Disraeli who had now become Lord Beaconsfield. The atrocities committed by Turkey in suppressing the Bulgarian revolt had roused strong anti-Turkish feeling in Britain and were the subject of spirited debates in Parliament between Gladstone and Disraeli. Gladstone spoke for the mass of the English people who sympathised with the Balkan Christians, but Disraeli had his way.

Though Disraeli saved Turkey from Russian aggression, this did not solve the Eastern Question, i.e. problems arising from the gradual dissolution of the Turkish Empire. The Greeks had already thrown off the Turkish yoke and Egypt too had become practically independent. The Czar Nicholas I who called Turkey 'the sick man of Europe' had at one stage proposed sharing out the decaying Empire among the great powers. The proposal was rejected by Britain because of the conflicting interests of the great powers. Russia had her eyes

on Constantinople and the Balkans, but Britain would not permit Russian supremacy in the Mediterranean and the Near East, for that would have gravely endangered British trade in the Mediterranean and British possessions in Asia, specially India. Turkish misrule, involving as it did periodical massacre of Christians, was an abomination to Christian Europe, and it continued even after the Berlin treaty. So even Britain got disgusted, and the Russo-Turkey came more and more under German influence and this was one of the causes of the Great War of 1914-18.

Britain and Africa. Britain had taken Cape Colony from the Dutch in 1815. As the Boers (descendants of Dutch settlers) could not get on with the British, they moved north, but the British followed them everywhere until they were masters of Natal, Transval, Orange Free State and Rhodesia. The clash of interests between the two was inevitable and culminated in the Boer War (1899-1902) in which the Boers were defeated. The South African colonies were first given self-government and later formed the Union of South Africa (1910).

Egypt. Egypt was a part of the Turkish Empire and was ruled by a viceroy called Khedive. Though theoretically owing allegiance to the Sultan of Turkey the Khedive was practically an independent ruler. The extravagance of Ismail Pasha, the Khedive, led to his taking large loans from France and Britain, who in order to protect their interests established their 'Dual Control' over Egypt. The discontent of the Egyptians with the misrule of Tewfik, the successor of Ismail Pasha, and with European interference resulted in a revolt which was crushed by British troops from India and England. France had retired from her responsibility and it fell to Britain to restore order single-handed. In the process the British occupied Egypt (1882). Nominally the government continued to be that of the Khedive, but the entire administration was in British hands. This, however, was not the end of British involvement in Egypt. Though Egypt had always claimed lordship over the Sudan and had her garrisons there, the desert tribes were more or less independent of her. Among them arose a man called 'Mehdi' who claimed to be successor of the prophet Mohammad with the mission of overthrowing the Khalifate and establishing the supremacy of Islam. Taking advantage of the Khedive's incompetence, the fanatical hordes of the Mehdi threatened invasion of Egypt. The Egyptian garrisons were trapped and had to be evacuated. Gladstone's government in 1884 sent General Gordon (he had been Governor-General of the Sudan) for this task. In the Sudan he found himself shut up at Khartum and perished after withstanding a siege of 317 days (1885). The expedition sent to his relief arrived too late. The Gordon tragedy was a great blow to Gladstone's popularity. The Sudan was abandoned for the time being, and it was not until 1898, thirteen years after, that it was reconquered by Kitchener. The condition of Egypt and the Sudan was vastly improved during the British occupation which lasted until 1922 when Egypt became practically independent under a king of her own.

British Empire. By the end of the 19th century and early 20th century British empire had come to consist of six British States (Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa) as well as India and a host of smaller colonies or dependencies scattered throughout the world. Four of these had become self-governing Dominions³—Canada (1867), Australia (1900), New Zealand (1907), South Africa (1910). India and Ireland were still agitating for Home Rule at the close of the century and the Victorian era.

Society and Thought

At the back of reforms in the nineteenth century was the Liberal thought of Jeremy Bentham and his disciples James Mill and his son John Stuart Mill. Bentham was the father of Utilitarianism viz., the doctrine that the criterion of good government as of all legislation is the greatest good of the greatest number. He and his followers believed in and preached absolute freedom of the individual. This concept of individual liberty had been first preached by Rousseau and later propagated by Tom Paine, Godwin and others. The philosophical radicals, as Bentham and his disciples came to be called, believed that only by leaving the individual free to think and do as he pleased (subject to similar freedom of others) could the greatest good of the greatest number be promoted. They opposed all privilege and favoured the abolition of all artificial disabilities and restrictions such, for example, as those imposed upon Non-conformists, Catholics and Jews. The emancipation of Catholics,

³*Canada.* Canada was conquered from the French in the Seven Years' War (1756-63). British rule attracted British immigrants and soon the colony had to be divided into two parts—Lower Canada mostly French, and Upper Canada mostly British. Racial jealousies led to frequent quarrels between the two, and unsatisfactory government led to rebellions in both against the mother country (1837). The rebellions were easily suppressed and Lord Denham was sent out as High Commissioner to make the peace and submit a report on Canadian affairs. On the basis of the *Denham Report* the British Parliament passed the Canada Act (1840) which united the two Canadas under a single responsible government like that of Great Britain. Since, however, the needs of the two were found to be widely different, this arrangement was modified in 1817 by making Canada a federation. Under the system, familiar to us in the Indian Republic, the provinces manage their local affairs, each through its own Assembly, while the Central Parliament at Ottawa looks after those affairs which concern the whole of Canada. The king of England is represented by a Governor-General who acts as a Constitutional head.

Australia. This southern continent was discovered and claimed for Britain by Captain Cook in 1770. Later it split into six states, each of which eventually got responsible government (1850). All the states (except Western Australia) accepted a federal constitution and the *Commonwealth of Australia* came into existence on January 1, 1901. It has all the features of the Dominion of Canada.

New Zealand. It was discovered by the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman in 1642. It is just two islands (North and South) lying to the South-east of the mainland of Australia. It was occupied by the British in 1839. In the beginning there were many conflicts between the Maories, the original inhabitants, and the British, but in course of time relations between them have improved and the two peoples now live under a single or unitary government. It became a Dominion in 1907 with its own Parliament, Prime Minister and Governor-General.

the abolition of the Test Act, the admission of Jews to parliament—all these must be credited to liberal thought. The liberals also opposed all interference by the Government in commerce and industry; and Free Trade was the result. They extended this doctrine of *Laissez faire* or non-interference even to cases of industrial distress and opposed Factory Acts. Only John Stuart Mill, though a great champion of individual liberty, had the good sense to realise the limitations of this theory. The weak in society, he conceded, needed governmental protection from the rapacity of the exploiter as from other evils of unrestricted competition. In the event, extreme individualists came to realise that not less interference but more and more interference by the government was necessary to ensure the greatest good of the greatest number. The result was, as we have seen, a spate of social legislation with the avowed purpose of mitigating the hardships and iniquities of a system based on privilege, prejudice and custom, whether this or that law was passed by a Liberal or Conservative government. Mill was also a great believer in the equality of the sexes, and his advocacy of the cause of women led to a better appreciation of their status in society. Their position won further recognition in the work of Florence Nightingale and her loyal band of nurses in the Crimean War, which incidentally created a new profession and a new opening for women's entry into public life. The philosophical radicals preached their doctrines through their periodical, the *Westminster Review*, founded by Bentham in 1824.

Liberalism which did so much in the socio-economic field had a disturbing effect upon religion. The liberals like John Stuart Mill valued Christianity only as a code of ethics. They rejected its mystery and dogma. This secularisation of religion provoked a strong protest from the orthodox in the shape of what is known as the 'Oxford Movement.' A group of clergymen consisting of Keble, Pusey, and Newman launched a series of *Tracts for the Times* which appeared between 1833 and 1841. They pleaded for a revival of primitive and orthodox Christianity with its emphasis on dogma and ritual, thus narrowing the gulf between Protestant and Catholic churches. The logic of the movement ultimately led Newman, the ablest of its exponents, to embrace Roman Catholicism in 1845. The movement which created a great ferment in the religious world faded away after Newman's conversion, but not without leaving a permanent mark on the Anglican Church by developing within a 'High Church' party with its love of ceremonial, dogma, and other leanings towards Roman Catholicism.

Orthodox religion received later a stronger jolt from the impact of science. Lyell's works on Geology (1830-63) established first that the earth was millions of years old when according to the Book of Genesis its age was only a few thousand years, and secondly that man too had lived on earth for a much longer period than that given in the Bible. Then came Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871), the first with its theory of natural selection,

which related man to lower forms of life, and the second with evidence that man had descended from the ape. These discoveries outraged the Orthodox and generally tended to undermine the average man's faith in the literal truth of Christianity. Though the doubts thus created continued to agitate men's minds throughout the country and though the sects maintained their separate identity (as they do even now), rationalism won the battle for a spirit of free inquiry into Truth and for a greater appreciation of the essence of religion. At the end of the century sectarianism had all but died out, and there was among the churches far greater understanding and toleration than in any preceding period.

The unprecedented prosperity of England specially during the middle years of the century bred in many people a mood of optimism and self-complacency—a mood based on the belief that this progress would be perpetual. This belief in limitless progress was boosted by Macaulay in his *History of England* (1848-61). Macaulay, though a brilliant writer, had an essentially shallow mind and only shallow-minded people shared his view. The optimistic mood was by no means universal. The spectacular progress in material well-being directly flowing from the Industrial Revolution did not blind serious-minded people to the grave social and economic problems that revolution had brought in its wake. The appalling contrast between the rich and the poor led Disraeli to describe England as consisting of 'two nations.' Those who in the twentieth century make fun of the facile optimism and complacency of the Victorian era forget that its greatest prophets—Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold—denounced, each in his own way, the spirit of the age, the spirit that is to say, which equated civilization with material progress. Though there was considerable improvement in the conditions of the working classes, the social problem had not been solved at the end of the Victorian era. Poverty, even dire poverty, still persisted in many areas, as was apparent from the steady growth of trade unions embracing all classes of workers, skilled and unskilled; from the revelations made by Charles Booth's inquiry into the conditions of the people of London; from the charitable work of the Salvation Army of General Booth in the East end of London; from the emergence of socialism as a powerful force in national life. The founding of the Fabian Society in 1884 (with its practical programme of wresting socialistic reforms from the Government bit by bit) and of the British Labour Party in 1900 were events of the first importance in the history of British socialism. At the close of the century it seemed that the social problem might well become (as it actually did become) the most crucial issue of British politics in the coming century. There was, however, a general awareness of the problem and attempts were being made to bring about a more equitable distribution of national wealth.

Morally the Victorian age was a great improvement on the eighteenth century. Open and unabashed profligacy of the upper classes which had disgraced that century was a thing of the past, thanks to the religious revival brought about by the Methodist movement. The

aristocracy which at the beginning of the century had consisted exclusively of land-owners had at its end a large admixture of those of the middle class who had made their fortunes in commerce and industry. It was this class which set the tone of Victorian society by its traditional ideals of morality and respectability. Another powerful influence for good was that exercised by the exemplary life of the Queen and the Prince Consort.

Distinctions of class and creed were fast disappearing, thanks to the expanding education and dissemination of democratic ideas. Popular newspapers and magazines of all kinds had multiplied and served to provide instruction as well as relaxation to educated and half-educated alike. The remarkable progress in the field of mechanical inventions, the phenomenal increase in material goods, and undreamt-of facilities of transport by railways and steamboats—all this had revolutionised Victorian society and made life more comfortable and pleasant for most people. Even the poor were much better off than they had ever been before.

All these aspects of life in the nineteenth century—political, social, economic, religious, moral—are reflected in its literature. In the perspective of the years that have passed, that literature presents a varied picture of light and shade, optimism and pessimism, realism and idealism. So far as a general assessment of it can be made, it is a literature whose dominant note is high moral purpose.

There is no convenient label, like the 18th century's 'Age of Reason,' to describe the literature of the whole of the 19th century. It is customary to divide it into two periods: the Age of Wordsworth and the Age of Tennyson. Their limits for the sake of convenience rather than for strict chronological accuracy, may be set, for the first from 1798 to 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession to the throne and for the second, from 1837 to the close of the century. The Age of Wordsworth covers the period of what is called the Romantic Movement or more correctly the Romantic Revival, made glorious by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats, in poetry; by Scott and Jane Austen in prose fiction; and by Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey in criticism. Remarkable, however, as its achievements in prose are, the Age of Wordsworth is pre-eminently an age of poetry.

The spirit behind the Romantic Movement was the same that had led to the American War of Independence and the French Revolution and was to lead in England to the Reform Bill of 1832. In literature the spirit manifested itself in revolt against the rules and restrictions of the school of Pope and asserted the principle of liberty—liberty for the poet to follow his own genius both in choosing his subjects and in his manner of treating them. The result was a complete reversal of values in poetry. Imagination replaced Reason, individuality replaced conformity. The change was proclaimed by the publication in 1798 of the *Lyrical Ballads*, a book of poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge. It was inevitable that this revolutionary change

CHAPTER 32

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH:
THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

The Romantic Movement: a revolt against the neo-classical school of eighteenth century and a return to the literary ideals of the Elizabethans—Distinction between Classical and Romantic—Three impulses of the Movement: Freedom of Imagination, Passion for Nature, Yearning for the Past—Precursors of the Movement in the eighteenth century from Thomson to Burns—Movement stimulated by German philosophy and French Revolution—Definition of the romantic: addition of strangeness to beauty—*The Lyrical Ballads*: Their aims and ideals; their epoch-making character—Romanticism popularised by Scott and Byron.

The Romantic Movement at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century was a deliberate and sweeping revolt against the literary principles of the Age of Reason. Just as Dryden and Pope had rejected the romantic tradition of the Elizabethans as crude and irregular and had adopted classical or more correctly neo-classical principles of French literature in their writings, so now Wordsworth and Coleridge, in their turn, rejected the neo-classical principles in favour of the romantic. In doing so they were simply reverting to the Elizabethan or the first romantic age in English literature.)

Now what is it that distinguishes Classic from Romantic? Simply put, classical writing is characterised by reason or commonsense in matter, expressed in a restrained style—style, that is to say, which has order, proportion, and finish. Romantic writing, on the other hand, is characterised by Imagination in matter, expressed in a style more or less free of restraint—a style, that is to say, which may be simple or grand, picturesque or passionate, depending on the mood or temperament of the writer. In other words, classicism subordinates matter to form; romanticism subordinates form to matter. Classicism stands for regimentation, regulation, authority; Romanticism for individuality, informality, freedom.)

It is important at this point to note that while there is great similarity between the Elizabethan age and the age of Wordsworth, the latter is romantic with a difference. That difference consists in

its attitude to external Nature. (Wordsworth and his group of poets looked upon Nature from points of view unknown to the Elizabethans, except Shakespeare. The intensity of their feeling for Nature and the subtlety of their interpretation of it are such that all other Nature poetry beside theirs pales into insignificance)

The causes and character of the Romantic Movement have been subjects of endless debate and discussion by literary historians. To name only two, Professor Herford's famous introduction to his *Age of Wordsworth*, and Theodore Watts-Dunton's article on 'The Renaissance of Wonder in Poetry' in *Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, are fascinating reading, but the student who wants to get a sharp and clear picture of the movement had better postpone these till he has attained greater maturity of judgment; for as a beginner he is liable to be distracted from the romantic movement itself to the subtler and more glamorous romanticism of its appreciators.

(The chief cause of the movement was a desire to enlarge the bounds of poetry by freeing it from the shackles of Neo-classicism. The neo-classic creed laid down definite rules for the writing of poetry. These may be stated as follows:)

(1) Write only what is rational, choosing your subjects from every day life—axioms, truths, mottoes, which have been uttered by wise men of the past. Avoid flights of fancy and imagination. Avoid also passion and enthusiasm as unbecoming of a gentleman. They are not 'good form'.

(2) Embellish your subject with a style that is elegant and polished. For this confine yourself to one regular, smooth metre—that of the closed couplet—and to polished language—language, that is to say, which has been hallowed by poetic custom. Don't stray beyond this stock of 'poetic diction.' Within these limits you may show your skill as much as you please.

(These rules, the Romantics felt, artificially and unnecessarily restricted the freedom of the poet. They believed that genuine poetry was a free and spontaneous utterance of the poet's imagination and not mere embellishment of other people's thoughts. They believed, further, that the poet was free to follow his own fancy in the matter of language and versification.)

Besides this desire for freedom in the substance as well as the technique of poetry, there was among the new writers a revived passion for Nature, and an yearning for the past, something 'remote and afar'—the world of medieval ballads, Celtic chivalry and legend, ancient Greece, the mysterious East, etc.

(Desire for imaginative freedom, passion for Nature, yearning for the past—these three impulses had been stirring through the 18th century and preparing the way for the romantic revolution almost from the time of Pope himself. They had created, as it were, a distinct line of poetry opposed to Pope's and parallel to it which is traceable through the work of Thomson, Collins, Grey, Percy, Macpherson, Chatterton, Blake and Burns. These earlier rebels exemplified in

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their writings all the characteristics which were to distinguish the later romantics—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats. From one point of view they were innovators, and yet from another, they were simply returning to the older, Elizabethan way of writing, to the literature, that is, of imagination, intuition, emotion. They are thus the connecting links between the two ages of romance.

While a general desire for change or reorientation of English poetry was the real cause of the Romantic movement, there were two external or accidental influences (not causes) which served to energise it. One was the influence of Germany, and the other of French Revolution. Germany, after an eclipse of nearly two centuries, had taken great strides in poetry and drama under Goethe and Schiller, and in philosophy under Kant and Schelling, during the second half of the 18th century. German thought, especially the transcendental philosophy of Kant fascinated Coleridge and De Quincey. This philosophy rejected the materialistic interpretation of the universe and held that Reality was a spiritual essence that transcends (lies beyond) sense experience.

The other influence, that of the French Revolution though great, has been much exaggerated, specially by French and American writers. It stimulated and accelerated the Romantic movement in literature, but it did not initiate it. The French Revolution which started with the fall of the Bastille in 1789 came long after Thomson's *Seasons* (1726-30), which had fired the first shot in the romantic revolt against Pope. Nevertheless, it was an important factor in the movement and almost all the romantics were infected by its ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity. It was the mightiest upheaval in recorded history and profoundly influenced civilised thought everywhere. England did not escape its impact. It intensified the feeling of revolt not only against kings but against the entire established order of things. The tide, however, did not last long in England and many turned away from it because of its horrors and cruelties. Wordsworth who in his youthful enthusiasm had written —

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very heaven.

went over to the anti-revolutionist camp, and by accepting the poet-laureateship provoked Browning's attack on him in his poem 'The Lost Leader.' Southey and Coleridge who similarly fired with revolutionary zeal in their youth had planned to build in America their utopian Commonwealth a "Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna"—were repelled by the excesses of the Revolution and drifted away to the conservative fold. The younger generation of romantics, however, that of Hazlitt, Byron, and Shelley, remained loyal to its principles right to the end.

In fixing the character of the Romantic Movement we had better keep clear of the learned and high sounding definitions given of it

and grasp its essence instead. We all know what is romantic though we may not be able to define it. The romantic in ordinary life is an escape from its monotonous routine, its conventionality and custom. The charm of the romantic consists in novelty and variety. A picnic in the countryside, boating in the moonlight, exploring a mountain peak, a runaway marriage, colourful dress, mutton-chop whiskers, girls' pigtails, one hanging behind, the other in front—all these are manifestations of the romantic spirit. The same may be said of things that are separated from us by distance, either of time or space. They fascinate us by their remoteness: distance lends enchantment to the view. Keeping in mind the three impulses of the romantic—imagination, passion for Nature, yearning for the past—it is easy to see that the Romantic Movement was nothing but an extension to the field of literature of man's unquenchable thirst for beauty that lies in the strange, the extraordinary, the remote. Combination of strangeness and beauty constitutes the romantic in literature.)

The Lyrical Ballads. The book that marks the beginning of the Romantic Movement was the *Lyrical Ballads* produced jointly by Wordsworth and Coleridge and published in 1798. It opens with Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and closes with Wordsworth's *Lines written above Tintern Abbey.* The *Ancient Mariner* and the *Tintern Abbey*, however, may be said to contain in germ, all the poetry of the 19th century.

Describing the origin of the *Lyrical Ballads* in his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge points out the kinds of poetry the two poets had aimed at. In the poems of Coleridge the characters and incidents "were to be, in part at least, supernatural," yet possessing such "human interest and a semblance of truth" as "to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to deal with persons and objects of everyday but in such a way as to give them "the charm of novelty" and to excite a feeling analogous to the super-natural, by awakening the mind from "the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonder of the world before us: an inexhaustible treasure but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand."

Wordsworth in his Preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) explains his object thus: "The principal object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as possible, in a selection of language actually used by men, and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." He chose humble and rustic life, he goes on to explain, because in that condition the essential nature of humanity finds a more congenial soil to grow and to express itself more naturally and freely than is possible in the sophisticated atmosphere of town.

The aims and ideals of poetry thus set forth show the epoch-making character of the *Lyrical Ballads*. To deal with the supernatural—the “shadows of imagination”, to deal with Nature and rustic life and that too in the colloquial language of the rustics—all this ran counter to the principles and practice of the Augustan school with its insistence upon civilized interests of town life rendered in a formal, stereotyped, gaudy phraseology. The most important point to note in the Romantic manifesto, however, is the emphasis on Imagination. Though working in two different directions—the supernatural and the natural—the two poets were to achieve the desired result through one and the same instrument, that of the imagination. And imagination, let it be remembered, not in the narrow eighteenth century sense of “ideas furnished by the senses” but in the larger sense of creative power, of what Coleridge called “the shaping spirit of imagination.”

This was simply re-stating the position of the poet and the origin of poetry as declared by Shakespeare in the famous passage of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—

The launatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact.
The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.

(Act V, Sc. 1)

According to this theory the poet is not, as Pope asserted, a mere embellisher of truths discovered by other people, but a discoverer of his own truths. He is a seer, a prophet, who sees visions and communicates them to the world to solve life's riddles. In the words of Shelley, “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.”

Incidentally, ‘The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling’ in the Shakespearean passage finds an echo in the poet's ‘flashing eyes and floating hair’ in the final stanza of *Kubla Khan*, which is generally regarded as the very limit of pure poetry. The close correspondence between these two descriptions of the poet in his mood of ecstasy has not (to my knowledge) been noticed so far by any critic. There are other resemblances in phraseology, such as, Shakespeare's ‘airy nothings’ and Coleridge's ‘these shadows of imagination,’ Shakespeare's ‘turns them to shapes’ and Coleridge's ‘the shaping spirit of imagination.’ Was the coincidence conscious or unconscious? However that may be, in restoring Imagination as the supreme faculty of the poet, the *Lyrical Ballads* opened a new chapter in the history of English poetry. The book, however, had no immediate effect on the public. It was not till the appearance of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* in 1805 that the new poetry attracted general attention. Romanticism was popularised not by its pioneers, Wordsworth and Coleridge, but by Scott and Byron.

CHAPTER 33

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH: ROMANTIC POETS (1)

Wordsworth: spiritual interpretation of Nature his chief distinction among Nature poets—His inequality—Its causes: fitful inspiration and his theories—His teaching—Coleridge: his scanty production—Its causes: versatility and lack of will-power—The keenest mind among the Romantics—Greater as an influence than as a poet—His criticism—Southey: a professional man of letters—As poet mediocre—Scott: a genuine poet wrongly depreciated because of his popular appeal which consists in his simpler romanticism—His excellence as a story-teller.

Wordsworth (1770-1850). Son of a lawyer and land agent to Lord Lonsdale, William Wordsworth was born April 7, 1770 at Cocker-mouth in the Cumberland highlands. The boy's parents died early, his mother when he was eight and father when he was fourteen. He received his school education at the neighbouring village of Hawkshed. His school days were very happy, spent as they were in great freedom of playing and reading. At seventeen he entered St. John's College, Cambridge. In his third vacation he went with a friend on a walking tour of France. After taking his degree in 1791 he again went to France where he stayed for a year. Like so many of his generation he was very enthusiastic about the French Revolution, but was cured of this later. In 1797 and 1798 he lived in close association with Coleridge, and the result of this friendship was the *Lyrical Ballads*. After the publication of this book, Wordsworth, his sister Dorothy, and Coleridge visited Germany. Returning home in 1799 he settled with his sister at Grasmere in the lake district, published the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, and in 1802 married his cousin Mary Hutchinson.

The rest of his long life was uneventful except for his travels (in Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and on the Continent) and the publication, at intervals, of his works. It was one of the happiest of lives, a life of steady work and quiet contemplation, disturbed only by such occasional sorrows as fall to the lot of all humanity. Further, it was a life singularly free from the struggle to make a living. Wordsworth was poor in the beginning, for he had been deprived of his father's

money by his employer, but for a man of 'plain living and high thinking' that he was, whatever little he had sufficed for his needs. A kindly Providence soon improved his financial position. In 1795 a young friend, Raisley Calvert, left him a legacy of £ 900 to enable him to devote himself to poetry. His father's money too was, after some delay, paid to him by the second Lord Lonsdale together with accumulated interest. This same Lord, moreover, procured him a sinecure—the post of distributor of stamps—on £ 400 a year. Another patron, Sir George Beaumont who died in 1827 left him an annuity of £ 100 for annual travel. In 1842 the Government granted him a pension of £ 300 a year.

Wordsworth was long neglected by the public and abused by the critics, specially and most forcibly by Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*; but the tide turned at last and he won recognition during the last two decades of his life. He received an honorary degree from the University of Durham in 1838 and another from the University of Oxford in 1839. In 1840 he was honoured with a visit by the Queen Dowager (widow of William IV). In 1843 he was appointed Poet-laureate in succession to Southey. During the closing years of his life he was universally esteemed as the Grand Old Man of English letters. He died of a chill on April 23, 1850 at Rydal Mount, his home since 1813, and was buried in the Grasmere churchyard.

Of north-country stock Wordsworth was a strong rather than fine character. Among the great poets he reminds us of Milton. Stiff, austere, self-centred, and humourless, he was not very genial or sociable. Milton, though equally egotistic, was an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, but Wordsworth's egotism prevented him from appreciating the work of other poets, even when, like Scott and Southey, they were his friends.

Wordsworth's poetical work is voluminous, but only a small part of it is first rate. The rest is dull and prosaic and hardly worthy of his great genius. This inequality and its causes will be clear from the survey of his poetry that follows.

Wordsworth is famous as the greatest Nature poet of England. Nature had inspired Cowper, Burns and Blake before Wordsworth, and among his own contemporaries Byron, Shelley and Keats were great lovers of Nature. What is it then that makes Wordsworth so great? The distinction of Wordsworth lies in the fact that to him Nature was not mere physical loveliness, but a revelation of God. He worshipped Nature, because he saw in all natural objects the indwelling spirit of the Supreme Being. To him the myriad forms and phenomena around us were nothing but various manifestations of the divine. In short, he was a mystic, one who sees unity in diversity. This mysticism of his was a stumbling block to the majority of his countrymen, but to us in India, the land of mystics, it is a commonplace.

While this mystical love of Nature is the most distinctive characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry, there is another aspect of it which is equally important and not less characteristic. Wordsworth soon

realized that to love Nature is to love Man who is part and parcel of Nature. To love one's fellows is thus a cardinal principle of Wordsworth's philosophy and gives it profound human significance.

Another discovery that Wordsworth made in his quiet contemplation of Nature was that she is a great teacher and healer. Like the senior Duke in *As you Like It* he too found—

tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everytning

(Act II)

In Wordsworth's words—

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Was it Morley or somebody else who said that a vernal wood could teach him nothing? True, Nature cannot teach everybody. Wordsworth knew this and went on to add that to learn lessons from Nature you must 'bring with you a heart/That watches and receives.'

It was Wordsworth's conviction that by laying oneself open to the influences of Nature a person acquires not only wisdom, but health, beauty, and grace of body, and calm of mind. This is most eloquently described in the Lucy poems. The fifth stanza of the second is irresistible—

The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her, and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
As beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

That Nature is also a great healer and soother he discovered when he was in the grip of a great spiritual crisis. England's declaration of war against France was a great shock to Wordsworth. He was torn by a conflict between his patriotism and his loyalty to the principles of the Revolution. The crisis deepened when Napoleon betrayed the Revolution by entering upon a career of military aggression. All his hopes and aspirations for the betterment of humanity collapsed. He was filled with gloom and despair. From this mood he was rescued by the influence of his sister Dorothy. And she was able to do this by directing him to his first love—Nature whose beneficent power Wordsworth had forgotten amid the stress and strain he had undergone. His re-discovery of nature soothed him and led him back to peace. Nature restored his faith in divine Providence, which is the only sure support a man has amid the trials and tribulations of life.

Wordsworth's attitude to Nature did not become mystical or spiritual all at once. There were three stages in this development and they are described briefly in the *Tintern Abbey* and with greater detail in the *Immortality Ode*. In the first stage, his love of Nature was like that of a child—sheer animal delight in the freshness and beauty of natural objects. This, in the second stage, developed into an impassioned love like a young man's passion for his beloved when 'The sounding cataract/Haunted me like a passion?' The third stage was reached when these 'aching joys' and 'dizzy raptures' of youth yielded place to a quieter and more sober mood in which he became aware of the spiritual and human significance of Nature. He saw that Nature was the abode of God.

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

He realised that there was an indissoluble bond between Nature, Man, and God; and this realisation filled him with universal love and faith that all God's creation is full of blessings.

The burden of the 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' is not so much the loss of the visionary gleam of childhood as the compensatory gain in the enlargement of his human sympathies. In his maturer years, though the splendid vision of childhood had faded 'into the light of common day,' yet all was not lost, for he was now chastened and subdued, so that 'the meanest flower that blows' could give him 'thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.' Humanity and humility were no mean compensations.

Realising this power of Nature—power to teach, elevate, soothe and console—Wordsworth became filled with a mission to spread his philosophy of love and joy through his poetry. The decisive moment in his spiritual history that changed the whole course of his life occurred, during his first summer vacation from Cambridge. While returning home in the early hours of the morning after a night-long drinking and dancing party, he was so profoundly impressed by the scene before him—the sea, the mountains, the meadows, all bathed in the sweetness of the dawn—that his heart was filled 'to the brim' with 'thankful blessedness.' That experience was in the nature of a great illumination, which suddenly awakened him to a sense of his mission in life. In that brief moment he became 'a dedicated spirit.' No other poet except Milton has had such a deep, earnest sense of dedication to a lofty purpose.

In order to carry out his mission Wordsworth conceived the plan of a long and comprehensive poem, *The Recluse*, of which he was only able to write two parts: *The Prelude* by way of introduction, and the *Excursion*. It was fortunate that he could not fulfil the

plan, for inspite of some grand passages in the *Prelude* and the *Excursion* they are, for the most part, full of prosy moralisings. "Every great poet," he said, "is a teacher; I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." Wordsworth's poetry, thus, was prompted by a conscious didactic purpose. He was not writing simply to please but to enlighten. Academic theories apart, there is nothing wrong in making poetry a vehicle of teaching, but to be poetry that teaching must be transmuted into beauty. Wordsworth was able to effect this transmutation in inspired moments, but when inspiration failed him he became prosy and dull. This is the real reason for his inequality.

Another explanation lies in his theories. In his revolt against the 18th century 'poetic diction,' its 'inane and gaudy phraseology' he went to the other extreme of holding that there was no essential difference between the language of poetry and the language of the common people (or rather a selection of such language). (The saving grace of this qualification he did not realize). Another heresy of his was that metre was no essential of poetry. Coleridge, with his greater critical acumen, exposed both these fallacies in his *Biographia Literaria*. The heresy about metre has been held by some other poets including Milton, but it is belied by their practice. As to the other, we all know that the language of the common people cannot be the speech of poetry. When Wordsworth wrote down to this theory, he produced such rubbish as, for example, 'Simon Lee,' 'We are Seven,' 'The Idiot Boy,' 'The Thorn,' 'Goody Blake,' 'Harry Gill,' and 'Peter Bell.' Except, however, in a few poems such as these which he wrote to illustrate them, Wordsworth was not influenced by his theories. Poetry cannot be reduced to a formula, and his best poetry was the product not of his poetic doctrines but of his poetic genius. The doctrines, however, are historically important. They were an assertion of the new spirit of democracy, of the essential dignity of man as man, shorn of civilized trappings. Poetry had been too long occupied with lords and ladies and their affected ways. Wordsworth sought to correct this imbalance by choosing his strong independent and noble types in 'Michael,' the 'Cumberland shepherd,' and the 'Leech-gatherer.' The same democratic desire led him to seek poetic language in the speech of the common people. In these bold attempts he gave a new dimension to poetry. He enlarged its scope by adding subjects and characters hitherto considered unpoetic and by writing in language and style hitherto considered unfit for poetry. He may have overstated his case, but it must be admitted that by doing so he opened the way for spontaneity, naturalness and simplicity in poetry.

The simplicity of Wordsworth's style has great variety. He could write impressive blank verse, fine lyrical measures, odes and stanza forms of various kinds. Besides, he was a prolific writer of sonnets. In fact, he wrote over four hundred sonnets—more than any other poet before or since. These include two sonnet sequences the Ecclesiastical sonnets and the River Duddon sonnets—and a fairly large

number of occasional ones. The best known of the occasional sonnets are: 'The Sonnet on Sonnet', 'Upon Westminster Bridge,' 'On Milton' and 'The world is too much with us.'

What is the secret of Wordsworth's power? The power of Wordsworth's poetry derives from the intensity and sincerity of his spiritual experience. What comes from the heart goes to the heart. Wordsworth felt deeply but the emotion was calm and equable. It was not a disturbing, turbulent passion. Accordingly we are moved deeply, but it is a feeling of calm pleasure. The most pervasive quality of Wordsworth's poetry is its calmness and serenity. This is most aptly described in his classical poem *Laodamia*: "for the Gods approve/The depth, and not the tumult of the soul," and again "Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains."

Poetry, according to Wordsworth, was a record of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.' Moments of inspired perception produced an emotion which recollected after sometime revealed its spiritual significance. In other words, it was only when the original perception had faded away that the emotion to which it had given rise emerged. And this emotion was charged with meaning. This view of the origin of poetry seems unique, for no other poet has held such a view. But, then, few poets have taken us into confidence in this matter. If they had, we might have had a confirmation of Wordsworth's experience which, after all, is not so very strange or peculiar as it appears. However that may be, many of his poems were certainly based on 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.' The most obvious examples are: 'To a Highland Girl,' 'The Solitary Reaper,' 'The Daffodils,' 'What man has made of man,' and of course, the two great poems *Tintern Abbey* and the *Immortality Ode*.

To sum up, Wordsworth owes his distinctive position in English literature to his spiritual interpretation of Nature. Cowper, Burns, Byron, Shelley and Keats were all great lovers and admirers of Nature, but they were content with its external beauty. Wordsworth penetrated to the very heart of Nature and grasped its mystery. He saw in it a revelation of the universal spirit of God. No other poet made Nature his exclusive concern. To Wordsworth Nature was all in all. It was his religion—in fact, he had no other. He was certainly not a Christian in the ordinary sense. Because he saw in woods, mountains and meadows a living spirit, he has been called a pantheist; because he saw the one Universal Spirit permeating the whole universe, he has been called a mystic. Call him what you will; he lived, moved, and had his being in Nature. He made it his mission in life, his profession, to convert humanity to this new religion—a religion that brought health, joy, and peace to sorely tired humanity. To open men's eyes, specially of those who are shut up within the walls of cities to the beauty of 'this goodly universe,' and to open their hearts to its divine message—that was one part of his mission. Another part of his mission, and to him no less important, was to teach. He was not so successful in this part of his mission except in his greatest poems, where his inspiration enabled him to transmute

And on her dulcimer she played,
 Singing of Mount Abora.
 Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a delight 'twould win me
 That with music loud and long,
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
 And all who heard should see them there,
 And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes in holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

The resemblance of this picture of the inspired poet to Shakespeare's "The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling" has already been remarked.

Christabel is another fragment which evokes dark superstition, mystery, and horror. It affords no clue as to its meaning or how it was going to end. The only beautiful thing in it is the passage on Friendship in the Second Part:

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
 But whispering tongues can poison truth;
 And constancy lives in realms above;
 And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
 And to be wroth with one we love
 Doth work like madness in the brain.
 And thus it chanced, as I divine,
 With Roland and Sir Leonine
 Each spake words of high disdain
 And insult to his heart's best brother:
 They parted—ne'er to meet again!
 But never either found another
 To free the hollow heart from paining—
 They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
 Like cliffs which had been rent as under
 A dreary sea now flows between.
 But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
 Shall wholly do away, I ween,
 The marks of that which once hath been.



Apart from this gem of sentiment, *Christabel* is remarkable for its metre, which depends on four accents in each line while the number of syllables may vary from seven to eleven. Scott was so charmed by its music that he adopted it for his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

It will thus be seen that while each of these traditionally popular poems has an isolated passage to recommend it, they as wholes do not deserve the high praise bestowed on them. At the time they appeared, romance was in the air, and they were considered the very embodiment of romance. Even so, nobody except Lamb liked the *Ancient Mariner*. Felicity of expression and music are their chief

recommendations, and their lack of what Coleridge called 'a body of thought' makes them, according to some critics, good examples of 'pure poetry.' Nobody would deny them that title. Coleridge himself has said that to him poetry should be either good sense or music. They certainly have music.

Undue praise of these narrative poems has naturally resulted in relegating Coleridge's lyrical poems to the second place. But it is really as a lyrical poet that he ranks among the greatest romantics. Like Wordsworth's Coleridge's lyrical poems, whether on Nature or other subjects, are meditative in character. The best of them are 'Frost at Mid-night,' the 'Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni' and the 'Ode on Dejection.' That Coleridge's Nature poetry is, at times, as sublime as Wordsworth's may be seen in such lines as these from the afore mentioned Hymn.

Ye Ice-falls! ye that from the mountain's brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain—
Torrents, methinks, that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!
Motionless torrents! silent cataracts!
Who made you glorious as the Gates of Heaven
Beneath the keen full moon? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows? Who with living flowers
Of loveliest blue, spread garlands at your feet?
God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations
Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, God!
God! Sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice!
Ye pine-groves, with your soft and soul-like sounds!
And they too have a voice, you piles of snow
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God!

Delight in everything beautiful, whether of scene or sentiment, is the most characteristic quality of the substance of his poetry, as felicity of diction and music of verse is of its form. He fulfils his own specification for poetry as 'the best words in the best order.' And his best words have an artless simplicity which unlike Wordsworth's have nothing to do with any theory of poetic diction.

Coleridge's association with Wordsworth was beneficial to both, though it is not easy to determine who gained more from the other. They were complimentary to each other. The scheme of the *Lyrical Ballads* is eloquent of the contrast between the two. Wordsworth was a realist, Coleridge a romantic idealist. Coleridge fully shared the mysticism of Wordsworth, but while Wordsworth thought of himself as a teacher, Coleridge did not conceive himself in that role as a poet. His poetry teaches us little except the moral of the *Ancient Mariner*. But he was not without ambition to teach and leave a message to mankind as a philosopher. He interpreted German philosophy to England and opposed the materialism of Locke and Hume by giving a religious and spiritual interpretation of life. Indeed he may be said to have turned the current of English philosophy, and the idealism of Carlyle, Newman, Ruskin and others may be traced

to him. But, as in everything else, he failed to construct a coherent system of his own which would reconcile faith and reason and establish the mystic unity and harmony of God, man, and the universe. Though a failure in the practical conduct of life, Coleridge was a gentle, affectionate, and amiable soul, and far more friendly and attractive than Wordsworth. In his own words, he was 'idiotically good-natured.' We do not need the testimony of his numerous friends and admirers to believe that.

In his own day Coleridge was famous as a talker; today he is more valued as a critic. His *Biographia Literaria* (literary autobiography), though not an organised whole, contains some of the most philosophic principles of poetic composition to be found anywhere. An example is his distinction between Fancy and Imagination. Imagination is creative while Fancy is passive which simply puts together isolated mental pictures (memories and associations). Again his searching examination of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction and exposure of its fallacies is simply unanswerable.

His *Lectures on Shakespeare* reveal the writer's instinctive sympathy with the dramatist. They contain some of the most acute observations on the plays and their problems to be found in the whole field of Shakespearean criticism. He is at times so pithy that a sentence of his could be elaborated into a full-length essay. It must be remembered that Coleridge deals with Shakespeare as a dramatic poet and not as an expert technician of the stage—a view that was followed by most critics of Shakespeare in the 19th century. A more detailed discussion of Coleridge as a critic will be found in a later chapter.

To sum up, Coleridge's shortcomings should not be allowed to minimise the importance of what he did. His achievement in poetry, criticism and philosophy is of the first importance both in itself and in its influence on others. He influenced some of the greatest men of his day: Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, Byron, Lamb, and Hazlitt. Besides, his impact on English philosophy and religion was considerable. Fair criticism must come to terms with him by accepting the fact of irony of fate.

Southey (1774-1843). Resignation to irony of fate is even more necessary in the case of Southey, youngest of the Lake Poets. Considered as great as Wordsworth and Coleridge in his own day, he is hardly on our reading lists today. The irony is all the more cruel, considering that he hoped he would be one of the immortals. In the concluding stanza of the one poem by which he is chiefly remembered ('My days among the dead are past') he says—

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
My place with them will be;
And I with them shall travel on
Through all futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

And yet he is all but forgotten.

Robert Southey, born at Bristol, was educated at Westminster School (London) and at Balliol College, Oxford. He was a conscientious and industrious professional man of letters, who though only moderately successful, was able to support not only his own family but also the families of his two brothers-in-law, Coleridge and Lovell, who would otherwise have been homeless. As a poet he was a mediocrity, but as a man he was the greatest of the Lake School.

Though nobody is likely to read them now, it would be invidious not to record some at least of his principal poetical work. They are: Two volumes of Poems, a drama, *The Fall of Robespierre*, in collaboration with Coleridge, epics including *Thalaba* and the *Curse Kehama*, a bathetic poem in hexameters on George III, and *A Vision of Judgment*, containing in its preface a violent attack on the works of Byron. The latter retaliated by a parody, *The Vision of Judgment*. Besides the poem partly quoted above, Southey is remembered by his ballads and short tales, like 'The Battle of Blenheim,' 'Inchcape Rock,' 'Bishop Hatto' etc. Of his numerous prose works, mostly histories and biographies, the best known is *Life of Nelson*. The popular nursery tale of the 'Three Bears' is also by Southey.

Southey was a prominent contributor to the *Quarterly Review* in which he attacked those who had retained their revolutionary views. He was appointed Poet Laureate in 1813 and was later granted a pension by the Government. Exhausted by excessive mental work he died of softening of the brain in 1843.

Scott. (1771-1832). Sir Walter Scott was born a year after Wordsworth and a year before Coleridge in Edinburgh. The son of a lawyer he was educated at the High School and the University there. He studied law, was called to the bar, and became a professional lawyer, who later obtained two legal appointments. His imagination had been fired in childhood by the romantic tales and legends of feudal Scotland told by his grandmother. His intense love of Scottish history and tradition was stimulated quite early by Percy's *Reliques* and German romanticism. After some translations and imitations of German ballads, he published in 1802 his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, a collection of Scottish ballads together with some of his own. From this he proceeded to his first important original poetical composition *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) a metrical romance (a long romantic tale in verse). The metre chosen was that of Coleridge's *Christabel*. The poem was an immediate success. It was followed by other metrical romances: *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), *Rokeby* (1813), *The Lord of the Isles* (1815) and others. Realising even before *The Lord of the Isles* had appeared, that he had exhausted his poetic vein and that he could not compete with Byron in this field, he turned to his true vocation of a romantic novelist, and published *Waverley* in 1814. (An account of the Waverley novels will be found elsewhere).

Though lame from childhood, Scott took active part in the chase

and out-door sports. He declined the offer of poet-laureateship and recommended Southey for the honour. He was made a baronet, built a house 'Abbotsford' on the Tweed, and lived there like a Scottish laird (lord). He made enormous sums of money by his poems and novels, but lost all in the crash of the publishing firms of the Constables and the Bellantynes in which he was a partner. Refusing bankruptcy he heroically set to work to pay the enormous debt of more than two hundred thousand pounds by writing and paid off most of it, but the strain was too great and broke him. In 1830 he had a stroke of paralysis and after a vain trip to Italy (in a naval vessel provided by the Government) he died at Abbotsford in 1832. The remainder of his debt was cleared off at his death with the money realized from the sale of his copyrights.

The fact that Scott's poems were overshadowed by the greater success of his novels has led to a general belief that he is an inferior poet. This is a mistaken view. He is said to be facile, superficial, and without depth of feeling or philosophy. It is forgotten that Scott is a narrative poet, a teller of tales in whom facility of expression is an excellence rather than a fault. Nor does narrative poetry demand great depth of feeling or philosophy. He had noble emotions as well as wholesome philosophy, but he was too much of a Tory to parade the one or preach the other. His romanticism is singularly free from extravagance. A wholesome sobriety is the hall mark of all his works. Nevertheless, it may be admitted that Scott was a little careless in his composition. Maybe this casualness was due to his desire to be regarded as a gentleman who treated literature as a pastime, an amusement for his leisure hours rather than as a business.

Scott possessed genuine even great poetic gift, and some of his best passages would rank not much below the best of Wordsworth and Coleridge. But such comparison is beside the point. It is more pertinent to point out that but for Scott's poems, the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge would have taken much longer to win public favour. He was the real populariser of romantic poetry. His poems appealed to the people by reason of their simplicity, directness, and unphilosophising character. People who were bewildered by Wordsworth's mysticism and Coleridge's supernaturalism were fascinated by the simpler and more stirring poems of Scott. This popular appeal was later re-enforced by his romantic novels.

So much for the historical importance of Scott's poetry. As regards the intrinsic worth of his poems, their most striking excellence consists in the vigour of narrative. As a story-teller in verse (or for that matter, prose) Scott has never been surpassed. The stories have all the elements of romance: the romance of the past, the romance of love and chivalry, the fascination of the supernatural, the love of Nature. This romantic interest is considerably enhanced by the easy flowing, dashing verse, and even more by the brilliant descriptions—word-paintings of scenes of stirring action and of the beauties of Nature, specially in its wilder aspects.

Though principally a narrative poet, Scott had a lyrical vein to which he gave vent in many songs and ballads scattered not only in his poems but also in his novels. Everybody is familiar with his famous piece on Patriotism ('Breathes there the man') in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Other well-known songs or ballads are 'O Brignall banks' and 'A weary lot is thine' in *Rokeby*. 'Lôchinvar' in *Marmion* and 'Proud Maisie' in *The Heart of Midlothian*.

The period of history treated in Scott's metrical romances is mostly 16th or 17th century: only that of *The Lord of the Isles* is 14th century. By his romantic tales Scott brought home to Englishmen, as to Scotsmen, the image of Scottish character, customs, and scenery with a force of poetic truth that has made Scottish Highlands a land of romantic pilgrimage. A few specimens follow.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel

The way was long, the wind was cold,
The Minstrel was infirm and old;
His wither'd cheek, and tresses gray,
Seem'd to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy.
The last of all the Bards was he,
Who sung of Border chivalry;
For, welladay! their date was fled,
His tuneful brethren all were dead;
And he, neglected and oppress'd,
Wish'd to be with them, and at rest.
No more on prancing palfrey borne,
He caroll'd, light as lark at morn;
No longer courted and caress'd,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He pour'd, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay;
Old times were changed, old manners gone;
A stranger fill'd the Stuarts' throne;
The bigots of the iron time
Had call'd his harmless art a crime.
A wandering Harper, scorn'd and poor,
He begg'd his bread from door to door,
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp, a king had loved to hear.

Patriotism Innominatus

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
'This is my own, my native land!'
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd
As home ward footsteps he hath turn'd
From wandering on a foreign strand?
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,

Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
 And, doubly dying, shall go down
 To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
 Unwept, unhonour'd. and unsung.

Proud Maisie

Proud Maisie is in the wood,
 Walking so early;
 Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
 Singing so rarely.
 'Tell me, thou bonny bird,
 When shall I marry me?'
 'When six braw gentlemen
 Kirkward shall carry ye.'
 'Who makes the bridal bed,
 Birdie, say truly?'
 'The grey-headed sexton
 That delves the grave duly.'
 'The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
 Shall light thee steady;
 The owl from the steeple sing
 Welcome, proud lady!'

Brignall Banks

O Brignall banks are wild and fair,
 And Greta woods are green,
 And you may gather garlands there,
 Would grace a summer queen:
 And as I rode by Dalton Hall,
 Beneath the turrets high,
 A Maiden on the castle wall
 Was singing merrily:
 'O, Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
 And Greta woods are green!
 I'd rather rove with Edmund there
 Than reign our English Queen.'
 'If, Maiden, thou wouldst wend with me
 To leave both tower and town,
 Thou first must guess what life lead we,
 That dwell by dale and down:
 And if thou canst that riddle read,
 As read full well you may,
 Then to the green-wood shalt thou speed
 As blithe as Queen of May.'
 Yet sung she, 'Brignall banks are fair,
 And Greta woods are green!
 I'd rather rove with Edmund there
 Than reign our English Queen.'
 'I read you by your bugle horn
 And by your palfrey good,
 I read you for a Ranger sworn
 To keep the king's green-wood.'
 'A Ranger, Lady, winds his horn,
 And 'tis at peep of light;
 His blast is heard at merry morn,
 And mine at dead of night.'

Yet sung she, 'Brignall banks are fair,
 And Greta woods are gay!
 I would I were with Edmund there,
 To reign his Queen of May!

'With burnish'd brand and musketoon
 So gallantly you come,
 I read you for a bold Dragoon,
 That lists the tuck of drum.
 'I list no more the tuck of drum,
 No more the trumpet hear;
 But when the beetle sounds his hum,
 My comrades take the spear.

'And O! though Brignall banks be fair,
 And Greta woods be gay,
 Yet mickle must the maiden dare,
 Would reign my Queen of May!

'Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
 A nameless death I'll die;
 The fiend whose lantern lights the mead
 Were better mate than I!
 And When I'm with my comrades met
 Beneath the green-wood bough,
 What once we were we all forget,
 Nor think what we are now.'

Chorus:

Yet Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
 And Greta woods are green,
 And you may gather flowers there
 Would grace a summer queen.

The Rover's Adieu

A weary lot is thine, fair maid,
 A weary lot is thine!
 To pull the thorn thy brow to braid,
 And press the rue for wine.
 A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
 A feather of the blue,
 A doublet of the Lincoln green—
 No more of me ye knew,
 My love!
 No more of me ye knew.

'This morn is merry June, I trow,
 The rose is budding fain;
 But she shall bloom in winter snow
 Ere we two meet again.'
 He turn'd his charger as he spake
 Upon the river shore,
 He gave the bridle-reins a shake,
 Said, Adieu for evermore,
 My love!
 And adieu for evermore.'

CHAPTER 34

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH: ROMANTIC POETS (2)

Byron: his popularity in his lifetime due to the sensationalism of his exotic tales—A powerful genius, more intellectual than imaginative, spoiled by exhibitionism and insincerity—Shelley: Too abstract and insubstantial to have popular appeal, a visionary idealist betraying immaturity by his craze for sweeping reform—The greatest lyrical singer outside Shakespeare—Keats: The poet of sensuous beauty—His influence on succeeding poets—Minor poets: Moore, Campbell, Hood, etc.

After Scott we come to the second or younger generation of Romantics: Byron, Shelley, and Keats. They came to maturity when the older generation of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Scott had already produced their best work. All the three died young: Byron at the age of 36, Shelley at 29, and Keats at 26. The poetic flame in them, however, burnt intensely and during their short lives each produced work, which except perhaps Byron's, is destined for immortality. Byron who cannot be classed with the immortals of English poetry had, however, the satisfaction of achieving great fame in his lifetime. He became a legend not only in England but also on the continent. A lord, handsome, dashing, talented, melancholy and cynical, a lady-killer enveloped in scandal, the lame hero who had swum the Hellespont like Leander—he was for a time the darling of the upper class English Society. His works were read avidly and praised to the skies. While his European reputation is still very great, his reputation in his own country has steadily declined and is at the present day not more than that of a brilliant second rate poet.

BYRON

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), sixth Lord Byron, was born in London and succeeded to the title at the age of ten on the death of his great uncle—'the wicked Lord Byron'—who had sold a great part of the family estates. The poet was the only child of Captain John Byron by his second wife, a Scottish heiress. His first wife was a Marchioness whom he had married after first seducing her and

squandering her property. The only child of this first marriage who survived was a daughter Augusta. Between Byron and his half-sister who was six years older, there was a deep attachment, as some of his poems show. After his father's death (1791), Byron who was lame of one foot from birth lived with his mother in Scotland. He was educated at Harrow and Cambridge where he lived a very riotous life. He fell in love with a relative Mary Chaworth who rejected him and married another. This disappointment is poignantly expressed in *The Dream* (1816) a poem whose sincerity cannot be questioned. And yet he had addressed a licentious poem addressed to this same lady in a collection, *Fugitive Pieces*, published in 1806. The book was, however, suppressed by the advice of a friend.

In 1807, he published *Hours of Idleness*, a collection of poems in heroic couplets, which was severely criticised by the *Edinburgh Review*. Byron retaliated with *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1709), a vigorous satire in heroic couplets in which he attacked not only Jeffrey, the Scottish editor of the *Review*, but all poets of the romantic school—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Scott, while defending Pope and Dryden and their followers like Rogers and Campbell.

He then toured the continent for two years (1809-11) and on his return published the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) describing his travels. He awoke one morning and 'found himself famous.' To the travel years also belong the occasional pieces: 'Maid of Athens' (1810) and 'To Thyrza' (1811). He became the idol of aristocratic drawing rooms and had numerous love affairs. He followed up this literary success during the next four years with a series of sensational Oriental verse tales which put Scott out of business in this field. These are *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*. Then in 1816 his wife, an heiress, whom he had married only a year before, suddenly left his house taking with her their one-month old daughter named Augusta Adda. The reason long guessed and only whispered is now no secret. Byron was guilty of incest with his half-sister. Shunned by society, Byron left England never to return alive. He passed the remaining eight years of his life on the continent, first in Switzerland and then in Italy. In Switzerland, he came in contact with Shelley and had a love-affair with Jane Clairmont, Mrs Shelley's step-sister. The result of this *liaison* was a daughter, Allegra, who died in her fifth year. He had many other love-affairs in Italy. According to his own account he lived a very dissipated life in Venice from which he is said to have been rescued in 1819 by the Countess Guiccioli with whom and her husband he lived for the next four years at Ravenna, Pisa, and Genoa. The Count must have been a very accommodating husband, indeed. Considering the debauchery of which Byron boasted it is surprising that he should have produced the third and fourth Cantos of *Childe Harold* (1816; 1818), a number of dramas, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Mazeppa*, the last and perhaps the best of his verse tales, exquisite

The first two cantos take the pilgrim to Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Albania. The lands are described: Spain, the 'delicious land of fragrant fruits;' Portugal's Lisbon with its dirty streets and dirty citizens; Albania the Moslem country with its rugged mountains and crags. The Moslem luxury of the court of her chieftain, her savage people redeemed by their one virtue of friendship and hospitality; Greece with her old splendour, her mighty ruins, gods and goddesses in sad contrast to her bondage to the Turks. With these descriptions are mingled the poet's reflections, political, moral and extravagant. The French are cursed for their occupation of Spain and Portugal, Scotland and England for their plunder of Greek shrines. (Lord Elgin, a Scot, had taken away what are called the 'Elgin Marbles'). The most eloquent part is the poet's lament over the degradation of the Greeks who bent their knees to the Turk and did nothing to recover their glorious freedom. The poet consoles himself with the thought that Greece still has fair Nature.

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are the groves and verdant are thy fields,
Thine olive ripe as when Minerva smiled,
And still his honey'd wealth Hymettus yields;
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds
The freeborn wanderer of thy mountain air,
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
Still in his beam Mendeli's marbles glare;
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

(Canto 2, St. 87)

The second canto ends on a self-pitying note of despair—the typical Byronic gesture.

The third canto begins and ends with Ada, showing that Byron for all his narcissism was capable of love. The pilgrim passes on to Belgium where he 'stands upon the place of skulls, the grave of France, the deadly Waterloo.' He reflects upon Napoleon and his pride (unbowed beneath the ill fate piled upon him) as also on the state of Europe after his fall. From Belgium he passes to the Rhine with its ruined castles, Switzerland with its snowy Alpine peaks and the Jura (mountain). The poet reviews the historical association of the places visited, dwelling at some length on Rousseau and his beloved Julie and their pure passion, not forgetting Rousseau's influence in inspiring the French Revolution. The poet is so engrossed in his emotions and reflections that during long stretches the pilgrim is forgotten. Harold is revived once or twice, but mostly it is the poet who is kept before the eyes of the reader. The mask is dropped and Byron strikes a stronger pose of hidden grief which he wants to forget, he who has drunk the cup of life to the dregs; he who 'in deeds not years' 'has grown ages' 'piercing the depths of life,' so that nothing new in the way of sorrow, pain or strife can afflict him. He lives a life of silent suffering but has the strength to bear it without accusing Fate. To this despair and defiance is added the pose of the cynic and misanthrope.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me,
 I have not flatter'd its rank breath, nor bow'd
 To its idolatries a patient knee,
 Not coin'd my cheeks to smiles, nor cried aloud
 In worship of an echo; in this crowd
 They could not deem me one of such; I stood
 Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
 Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could
 Had I not filed my mind, which thus itself subdued.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me—
 But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
 Though I have found them not that there may be
 Words which are things, hopes which will not deceive,
 And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
 Snares for the failing; I would also deem
 O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
 That two, or one, are almost what they seem.
 That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream. (Canto 3, St. 113, 114)

Looking thus upon the world of men as his foe, he seeks friends and companions in mountains, ocean, lake, blue sky and forests. Here is his contemplation of Lake Lemman.

Clear, placid Lemman! thy contrasted lake,
 With the wild world I dwell in, is a thing
 Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
 Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
 This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
 To waft me from distraction; once I loved
 Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
 Sounds sweet as if a sister's voice reproved,
 That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

(Canto 3, St. 85)

Again, he feels oneness with the stars:
 Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
 If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
 Of men and empires—'tis to be forgiven,
 That in our aspirations to be great,
 Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
 And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
 A beauty and a mystery, and create
 In us such love and reverence from afar,
 That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

(Canto 3, St. 88)

Gazing at the stars he has a feeling of infinity and of eternal harmony which binds all things with beauty. The stars give him a vision of the Universal Spirit—

Not vainly did the early Persian make
 His altar the high places, and the peak
 Of earth o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
 A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek
 The Spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,
 Uprear'd of human hands, Come and compare

Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
 With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
 Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe the pray'r!

(Canto 3, St. 91)

In these and other stanzas there are echoes of Wordsworth. However, though the calm solitude of the lake and the stars soothes the poet, he is more at home amidst Nature's 'stern delights'—storms and tempests, thunder and lightning—

The sky is changed! and such a change! Oh night,
 And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
 Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
 Of a dark eye in woman! Far along;
 From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
 Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
 But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
 And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
 Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

(Canto 3, St. 92)

And this is in the night: Most glorious night!
 Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
 A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,
 A portion of the tempest and of thee!
 How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
 And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
 And now again 'tis black, and now the glee
 Of the loud hills shakes with its mountaint-mirth
 As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

(Canto 3, St. 93)

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
 Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
 In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
 That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted;
 Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted
 Love was the very root of the fond rage
 Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed:
 Itself expired, but leaving them an age
 Of years all winters—war with themselves to wage.

(Canto 3, St. 94)

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way
 The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
 For here, not one, but many, make their play
 And fling their thunderbolts from hand to hand,
 Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
 The brightest through these parted hills hath fork'd
 His lightnings, as if he did understand,
 That in such gaps as desolation work'd,
 There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurk'd.

(Canto 3, St. 95)

A distinct echo of Shelley's 'West Wind' is heard in stanza 93 and a not so distinct one of *Christabel* (piece on friendship) in stanza 94. The reader will also not fail to notice that the latter stanza, though purporting to be descriptive, is deeply coloured with his own emotion born of separation from his wife.

The fourth canto takes the reader to Italy, 'the garden of the

world, the home of all Art yields, and Nature can decree.' Byron now speaks openly in his own person of Venice of Arqua where lies the tomb of Petrarch, of Ferrara where Tasso was imprisoned by the despotic duke Alfonso; of Florence and Boccaccio, of Rome, that chaos of ruins and of her great men, Cicero, Virgil, Livy, Trajan and Rienzi. His musings sweep through the blood-stained history of ancient Rome and slaughter of man by man rouses him to righteous wrath. There is real pathos in the scene which visualises a gladiator dying in the arena—

The arena swims around him—he is gone
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who won.

And what of his wife and children in far-off Dacia? The poet continues—

He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away;
He reck'd not the life he lost nor prize,
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother—he their sire,
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday—
All this rushed with his blood—Shall he expire
And unavenged? Arise Ye, Goths, and glut your ire. (Canto 4, St. 141)

Then follow rhapsodies on the Coliseum and the Pantheon which still stand, the mighty dome of St. Peter's compared to which Diana's temple at Ephesus (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) was a cell, and the Vatican with its statues of Laocoon and Apollo.

At long last the pilgrim is remembered and finally consigned to oblivion. The poem ends with a paean on the Ocean: "Role on, thou deep and dark Ocean" etc. and a farewell to the reader: "Fare well! with *him* (the poet pilgrim) alone may rest the pain/If such there were—with *you*, the moral of the strain."

The most striking thing in *Childe Harold* is the character of its hero who is no other than Byron himself. The poem purports to be descriptive, but the descriptions, graphic as they are, seem merely an excuse for the parade of the poet's emotions and reflections. It is a curious and unprecedented blend of the objective and the subjective, in which the former is almost swamped by the latter. In reading Chaucer, Fielding, Scott, we are interested in the characters projected on the canvas and the incidents that happen. In *Childe Harold*, on the other hand, the only character that occupies the stage is Byron and the only incident that 'happens' is also Byron. The character so exhibited is a complex one. It is compounded of despair, defiance of Fate, cynicism and misanthropy. Even a casual eye can detect the poseur. The poet poses as a martyr. To excite the reader's imagination he throws over his sorrow a veil of mystery. The reader is left guessing at the cause of the poet's anguish. Could it be he

surmises, some nameless or unnameable guilt that weighs the poet down, or perhaps remorse that is searing his soul?

This mystery no doubt made the character of the pilgrim or author more romantic and was the secret of the poem's contemporary popularity. The romantic glamour that surrounded Byron has dimmed in course of time and lost much of its original appeal. So excessive, so incessant, is the exploitation of personal emotion and so challenging and strident is the rhetorical flourish with which it is expressed that the modern reader is compelled to ask "Could it be real?" Affectation and theatricality are too marked to pass unnoticed. The Byronic hero is a sham and Byronism a stunt.

Tales. Byron's verse-tales which eclipsed Scott's owed their success to their novelty, which consisted in their oriental background and sensationalism. They are steeped in crime, violence, and above all passion. The love in Scott's tale is chivalrous—decorous and dignified; in Byron's, on the other hand, it is a voluptuous, tumultuous, lawless passion. The heroes are one and all, minor Childe Harolds. They are Byronic in most respects, in their delinquencies, moral and other, their defiant pride, their gloomy loneliness, their ungovernable passion. Their pride and passion dooms them.

The *Giaour* (*Pron.* Ja-oor). It is a contemptuous term used by Turks for non-Moslems, specially Christians; something like 'Mlechha,' formerly applied in India to non-Hindus. Leila, a slave-mistress, is unfaithful to Hassan, her Turkish lord, and is in consequence sewn in a sack and thrown into the sea—the customary punishment for infidelity. The Giaour, her lover, avenges her by killing Hassan. He is stricken with remorse, for he realizes that the punishment meted out to Leila was just. Gloomy and despairing he confesses his crime to a monk but rejects his prayer and blessing, for according to him 'despair is mightier than thy pious prayer!'

The Bride of Abydos. Zuleika, daughter of Giaffar (Ja'far) Pasha, is to marry a rich Turkish governor, whom however, she has never seen. In this predicament she seeks the help of her beloved brother Selim. Selim reveals that he is not her brother but cousin, the son of her uncle who was poisoned by Giaffar. Giaffar who had instinctive fear of Selim had given him no martial training, though he had brought him up as his son. But Selim who knew the facts of his father's death was secretly a pirate chief. He asks Zuleika to share his lot. While they are thus conferring in a cavern near the sea beach and waiting for the pirate boat, Giaffar and his followers come upon them, and in the ensuing fight Selim is killed. Zuleika dies of a broken heart.

The Corsair. Corsair means pirate. The poem is in heroic couplets. Conrad, a pirate chief of the Aegean sea, is taken prisoner by Syed, a Turkish Pasha, but is released by the Pasha's slave mistress Gulnare who falls in love with him. Gulnare asks him to kill the Pasha in his sleep, but he refuses, for though a great criminal, he has the instincts of a chivalrous gentleman. Thereupon, Gulnare herself

kills the Pasha and elopes with Conrad. On return to his island he finds that his beloved Medora has died of grief at learning of the reported death of her lover. His joy in life gone, Conrad 'Linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes' disappears and is never heard of again.

Lara (in heroic couplets). This is a sequel to *The Corsair*. Lara is no other than Conrad who disappears in the previous story. He returns to his dominions in Spain, accompanied by his page Kaled (Khaleed) who is Gulnare in disguise. Lara is an altered man and though still not past the prime of life, lives a retired life, silent, cold, and aloof. 'But man and destiny beset him there.' He is drawn into a feud and is killed. He dies rejecting the cross offered to him for absolution. Gulnare whose sex is revealed at the end becomes mad with grief and dies broken-hearted. *Lara* is important for its more intimate personal interest. It is a sort of supplement to *Childe Harold*. In *Lara*, Byron duplicates his own character, taking special pains to analyse his defiant pride.

The Siege of Corinth. The story is founded on the siege of Corinth in 1715 by the Turks. The Turks are led into the fortress by a traitor, Alp, who is in love with the daughter of the governor. The governor blows up the magazine destroying besiegers and besieged including himself.

Parisina. The story is based upon a passage in Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works*. It is a domestic tragedy that took place in the fifteenth century in the Italian town of Ferrara. Prince Azo discovers the incestuous relations of his wife Parisina and his illegitimate son Hugo, a handsome and valiant youth. He passes on them a swift sentence. Hugo is beheaded in public, while Parisina meets her end in a manner that is left obscure.

The Prisoner of Chillon (1816). The prisoner was Francois de Bonivard (1496-1570) the prior of a monastery in Geneva. He conspired with some other citizens of that city to free Switzerland from the yoke of the duke of Savoy. He was imprisoned twice, his second imprisonment lasting six years (1530-36) in the castle of Chillon on Lake Geneva.

The poem consists of fourteen stanzas of varying lengths in octosyllabic couplets. To it is prefixed a sonnet which is given below. Bonivard describes the gloomy dungeon and the death, by slow decay, of his two younger brothers who shared the cell with him. They were buried inside the cell. He had become so inured to his cell that he was not too happy when people came to release him and 'even I/Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.'

The poem has genuine pathos and shows that Byron's love of liberty, at least, was sincere.

Prisoner of Chillon

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!

Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art,

For there thy habitation is the heart—
 The heart which love of the alone can bind;
 And when thy sons to fetters are consign'd—
 To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom.
 Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
 And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
 Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
 And thy sad floor an altar—for 'twas trod,
 Until his very steps have left a trace
 Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
 By *Bonnivard*! May none those marks efface!
 For they appeal from tyranny to God.

Beppo, *The Vision of Judgment* and *Don Juan*—all three are in ottava rima.

Beppo (1818). Byron found his true vein when in imitation of Italian masters he began writing in ottava rima (abababcc) which is so well adapted for satirical or mock-heroic style. *Beppo*, a Venetian merchant, had gone on a trading voyage from which he has not returned although several years have elapsed. Finding his absence irksome, his wife, Laura, has taken a rich Count as a 'vice-husband.' The husband, however, returns disguised as a Turk and confronts the pair. Strangely enough, no duel follows, and the whole thing is amicably settled over a cup of coffee. The Count and *Beppo* were friends ever after. The story is very lively and amusing with mocking digressions on England and Turkey.

The Vision of Judgment (1822). This is a ferocious satire on Southey who had attacked Byron the previous year in the preface to his poem *A Vision of Judgment*, a panegyric on the late George III. Byron makes fun not only of Southey but also of the King. The king is on trial before the court of Heaven. When evidence for the prosecution is closed, Southey appears as a defence witness and in spite of loud protests on all sides proceeds to read his poetry. He had read hardly three lines when the whole spiritual assembly dispersed in sheer disgust—

These grand heroics acted as a spell:
 The angels stopp'd their ears and plied their pinions,
 The devils ran howling, deafen'd, down to hell;
 The ghosts fled, gibbering, for their own dominions
 (For 'tis not yet decided where they dwell,
 And I leave every man to his opinions);
 Michael took refuge in his trump—but, lo!
 His teeth were set on edge, he could not blow!

(Stanza 103)

St. Peter, at the fifth line, knocks the poet down with his keys, sending him hurtling to the lake of hell. In this confusion the king slipped into heaven and was last seen practising the hundredth psalm.

Don Juan (1818-24). This, Byron's masterpiece, is a satire of epical length running to sixteen cantos. *Don Juan*, a charming, handsome

and valiant young man of Seville (a city in Spain) has a love affair at sixteen with the beautiful twenty three year old Julia, wife of the fifty year old Don Alfonso. Discovered in Julia's bedroom by her husband, Juan is sent abroad by his mother. His ship is wrecked, and he escapes along with some others in a boat. After great suffering during which his dog and his tutor are eaten up, he is cast on a lonely Greek island. He is revived by Haidee, the beautiful daughter of an old pirate who has a magnificent house on the island. Haidee and Don Juan fall in love. The father, away on an expedition and not returning for a long time, is taken for dead, and the lovers feeling secure hold a revel. He, however, returns suddenly and coming upon the lovers strikes down Juan, who is then put in chains and shipped off to Constantinople to be sold as a slave. While being led to the slave market, he is seen by the Sultana who falls in love with him. He is dressed up as a female and kept in the harem where he gets involved with his bed-mate. Having rejected the Sultana's advances and standing in imminent danger of death, he escapes and joins the Russian army which is besieging the town of Ismail, a Turkish stronghold on the Danube. As a reward for his courageous exploits in the capture of the town, he is sent with despatches to the Russian capital where he attracts the notice of the notorious Empress Catherine. She loads him with favours but after some time, tiring of his labours as a lover, he is sent on a secret political mission to England. The last six cantos are occupied with a satirical description of English society in which Don Juan finds himself the cynosure of all eyes, specially the ladies. The poem ends abruptly with Don Juan in the arms of a matronly Duchess, who has surprised him in his bedroom in the garb of a ghost at midnight.

Like Childe Harold, Don Juan is a mere name, an excuse, for the author's numerous digressions on all sorts of subjects—metaphysical, moral, social, and political—all treated in a mocking vein together with skits upon English poets and politicians whom he disliked. The poets selected for his satire are Milton, Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge; among the politicians Duke of Wellington, Castlereagh, Lord Loudonderry and many others. It is a medley of narration, description, episodes, reflections, fun and frivolity. A veritable hold-all, no summary can give an adequate idea of the rich variety of entertainment it offers. Here are a few samples of Byron's satirical wit—

Milton's the prince of poets—so we say;
 A little heavy, but no less divine,
 An independent being in his day—
 Learn'd, pious, temperate in love and wine:
 But his life falling in Johnson's way,
 We're told this great high priest of all the Nine
 Was whipt at College—a harsh sire-o'ld spouse,
 For the first Mrs Milton left his house

(Canto III, St. 91)

All are not moralists like Southey, when
 He prated to the world of 'Pantisocracy,'
 Or Wordsworth unexercised, unhired, who then

Season'd his pedlar poems with democracy;
 Or Coleridge, long before his flighty pen
 Let to the Morning Post its aristocracy;
 When he and Southey, following the same path,
 Espoused two partners (milliners of Bath)

(Canto III, St. 93)

There's doubtless something in domestic doings
 Which forms, in fact, true love's antithesis;
 Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
 But only give a bust of marriages;
 For no one cares for matrimonial cooings.

There's nothing wrong in a connubial kiss;
 Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
 He would have written sonnets all his life?

(Canto III, St. 8)

A young unmarried man, with a good name
 And fortune, has an awkward part to play;
 For good society is but a game,

'The royal game of Goose,' as I may say,
 Where everybody has some separate aim,
 An end to answer, or a plan to lay—
 The single ladies wishing to be double,
 The married ones to save the virgins trouble.

(Canto XII, St. 58)

For talk six times with the same single lady
 And you may get the wedding dresses ready.

(Canto XII, St. 59)

The fair sex should be always fair; and no man
 Till thirty, should perceive there's a plain woman.

(Canto XII, St. 3)

'Petticoat influence' is a great reproach,
 Which even those who obey would feign be thought
 To fly from, as from hungry pikes a roach;
 But since beneath it upon earth we are brought,
 By various joltings of life's hackney coach,
 I for one venerate a petticoat—

A garment of mystical sublimity,
 No matter whether russet, sick or dimity.

(Canto XIV, St. 26)

Much I respect, and much I have adored,
 In my young days, that chaste and goodly veil,
 Which holds a treasure, like miser's hoard,
 And more attracts by all it doth conceal—

A golden scabbard on a Damasque sword,
 A loving letter with a mystic seal,

A cure for grief—for what can ever rankle
 Before a petticoat and peeping ankle?

(Canto XIV, St. 27)

But ere the matter could be marr'd or mended,
 The silvery bell rang, nor for 'dinner ready'
 But for that hour, call'd *half-hour*, given to dress,
 Though ladies' robes seem scant enough for less.

(Canto XV, St. 61)

Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away;
 A single laugh demolish'd the right arm
 Of his own country;—seldom since that day
 Has Spain had heroes. While Romance could charm.
 The world gave ground before her bright array;
 And therefore have his volumes done such harm
 That all their glory, as a composition,
 Was dearly purchased by his land's perdition.

(Canto XIII, St. 11)

Lord Henry also liked to be superior,
 As most men do, the little or the great;
 The very lowest find out an inferior,
 At least they think so, to exert their state
 Upon: for there are very few things wearier

Than solitary Pride's oppressive weight,
While mortals generously would divide,
By bidding others carry while they ride.

(Canto XIII, St. 19)

Had Buonaparte won at Waterloo,
It had been firmness; now 'tis pertinacity:
Must the event decide between the two?
I leave it to your people of sagacity. . .

(Canto XIV, St. 90)

Though the whole poem is steeped in eroticism, the first six cantos are more luscious than the others. The opening Canto gives real farcical comedy in the scene where Juan is discovered in Julia's bedroom by her husband. The love-scenes—between Juan and Julia, between Juan and Haidee—are capitally done, while the episode of Juan's sleeping in the harem with the female slave Dudo is hard to beat for its mischievous suggestiveness. *Don Juan* is certainly not a poem for family reading.

The poem is conversational in style (Juan slept like a top), sometimes with deliberately comic rhymes. Nevertheless, it has some passages of fine poetry. The following extracts are from the more popular ones.

From Julia's Letter to Juan

Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

The Isles of Greece

The isles of Greece! the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of War and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute
Have found the fame your shores refuse:
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' Islands of the Blest.'

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free:
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—

And when the sun set, where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,

My country? On thy voiceless shore

The heroic lay is tuneless now—

The heroic bosom beats no more!

And must thy lyre, so long divine,

Degenerate into hands like mine?

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!

Our virgins dance beneath the shade—

I see their glorious black eyes shine;

But gazing on each glowing maid,

My own the burning tear-drop laves,

To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,

Where nothing, save the waves and I,

May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;

There, swan-like, let me sing and and die:

A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—

Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

(From *Don Juan*, Canto III)

This song is sung by a wandering bard at the revels of Haidee and Juan.

She loved, and was beloved—she adored,

And she was worshipp'd; after nature's fashion,

Their intense souls, into each other pour'd,

If souls could die, had perish'd in that passion,

But by degrees their senses were restored,

Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on;

And beating against *his* bosom, Haidee's heart

Felt as if never more to beat apart.

Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,

So lonely, loving helpless, and the hour

Was that in which the heart is always full,

And having o'er itself no further power

Prompts deeds eternity cannot annul

But pays off moments in an endless shower

Of hell-fire all prepared for people giving

Pleasure or pain to one another living.

Alas! for Juan and Haidee! they were

so loving and so lovely-till then never,

Excepting our first parents, such a pair

Had run the risk of being damn'd for ever;

And Haidee being devout as well as fair,

Had, doubtless, heard about the Stygian river,

And hell and purgatory—but forgot

Just in the very crisis she should not.

They look upon each other, and their eyes

Gleam in the moonlight; and her white arm clasps

Round Juan's head, and his around her lies

Half buried in the tresses which it grasps;

She sits upon his knee, and drinks his sighs,

He hers, until they end in broken gasps;

And thus they form a group that's quite antique,

Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek.

(From *Haidee and Juan*, Canto IV)

Lyrics. Byron's lyrics, like his longer works, are of unequal merit and suffer from the same taint of artificiality. Nevertheless, scattered

pieces in his longer works as well as some of those he wrote immediately after the separation, show real feeling. The best is *The Dream* which describes Byron's frustrated love for Miss Chaworth. The last three stanzas are given below—

VII

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love;—Oh! she was changed
As by the sickness of the soul; her mind
Had wander'd from its dwelling; and her eyes
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things;
And forms impalpable and unperceived
Of others' sight familiar were to hers.
And this the world calls frenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness, and the glance
Of melancholy is a fearful gift;
What is it but the telescope of truth?
Which strips the distance of its fantasies.
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real!

VIII

A Change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,
Or were at war with him; he was a mark
For blight and desolation, compass'd round
With Hatred and Contention; Pain was mix'd
In all which was served up to him, until,
Like to the Pontic monarch of old days,
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment; he lived
Through that which had been death to many men,
And made him friends of mountains: with the stars
And the quick Spirit of the Universe
He held his dialogues; and they did teach
To him the magic of their mysteries;
To him the book of Night was open'd wide,
And voices from the deep abyss reveal'd
A marvel and a secret—Be it so.

IX

My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality—the one
To end in madness—both in misery.

To sum up, the final impression produced by Byron's poetical works is one of power vitiated by exhibitionism. This power, however, is more intellectual than imaginative and is best displayed in the group of satires—*Beppo*, *The Vision of Judgment* and *Don Juan*. In these, together with the earlier *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, Byron shows his affinity with the Augustan school of Dryden and Pope of

which he was a professed admirer. In the main, however, he is romantic both in his subjects—love, travel and adventure—and in the form of his verse—short couplets of Scott, blank verse, Spenserian stanza, ottava rima and a variety of other stanza forms. His love of Nature, especially in her wilder aspects, and his revolutionary spirit also place him in the ranks of the romantics. If he fell foul of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey it was because he regarded them as traitors to the cause of the Revolution. His lyrics, though not as fine as Shelley's and Keats's, nevertheless possess a force and fire not found in theirs. However, that by which Byron scored over the other romantics was his expanding the horizon of English literature by bringing to it exotic scenery and passion, which made romanticism popular not only in his own country but also on the Continent. He broke through British insularity and put England on the literary map of Europe.

In spite of these achievements Byron has not been successfully rehabilitated in his own country ever since his denigration in the Victorian era. Why? There are three charges against him: artistic imperfection, immorality, and theatricality. As to the first, it must be admitted that Byron is a facile writer and this facility was purchased at the cost of artistic finish. Bad rhymes ('rock,' 'oak,' 'fellows,' 'jealous'), table-talk language, and outrageous grammar ('to entrance' as verb, 'there let him lay') point to hasty composition or just sheer carelessness. But these are minor defects and are condoned by Byron's sweep and strength. And, in any case, of what moment are they in the context of the rubbish that has been produced during the last fifty years or so in the name of 'modernistic' poetry? The second charge is more serious but has it any greater validity than the first in an age which has thrown all sexual taboos to the winds? It may, however, be added, without prejudice to the above defence, that if the literary world ever recovers its sanity it will damn Byron as unreservedly as did the Victorians.

The third charge is more formidable and cannot be brushed aside by any amount of special pleading. Terms like theatricality, exhibitionism and the like are euphemisms for insincerity, a fault too grave to be forgiven in a writer. Byron was continually attacking British cant and hypocrisy, and yet he himself indulged in a species of a pretence that is more loathsome. The spectacle of a man luxuriating in sorrow is not very pleasing and becomes positively abhorrent if the sorrow is pretended. And if to the picture are added affectation of singularity, crude, ostentatious display of pride and passion, cynicism and misanthropy, it is simply sickening. Whether it was morbidity or perversity that made Byron assume this pose is hard to decide. What is certain is that he flaunted this exaggerated and embroidered view of his lower self out of a perverse desire for the vain reputation of a wicked libertine. He rarely gives us a glimpse of his higher self; for such a self no doubt existed in the Byron who could inspire love and friendship and was himself capable of love, the Byron who could feel the immensity and mystery of Nature, the Byron who could

identify himself with Bonnivard, the Byron who could die for Greek independence. The result is that even these noble qualities become suspect in the eyes of the reader. May not these too be mere postures? Such is the fate of the complete poseur. Byron will continue to perplex posterity.

Shelley (1792-1822)

↓ Between Byron and Shelley there are many points of similarity. Both were aristocrats, both were in revolt against all established authority, political and moral, and both were voluntary exiles due more or less to the same reason—disrupted marriage. But these similarities make the contrast between them the more striking. From Byron to Shelley we are at the opposite extreme of poetic temperament. Byron was of the earth, earthy; Shelley was of the air, airy. Byron hated mankind; Shelley loved not only his fellow men but all creatures, his love extending to animals, birds and insects.

✓ Percy Bysshe Shelley, son of a baronet of Sussex, was educated at Eton and Oxford. After a year at the University he was expelled (1811) for having published a pamphlet on *The Necessity of Atheism*. Soon afterwards he eloped with Harriet Westbrook, daughter of a coffee-house owner whom he married at Edinburgh, English law not permitting marriage of minors. Expulsion from the University and marrying much below his rank alienated his family. For three years (1811-14) he led with Harriet a wandering life, engaging in reformist propaganda in Ireland and Wales. In 1813 he privately printed for circulation among his friends *Queen Mab* his first notable work. After a love-affair with a school mistress he left Harriet (1814) and eloped with Mary Godwin, daughter of the anarchical philosopher, to Switzerland. He married her after Harriet's suicide (1816). On his return he published his first great poem *Alastor* (1816) and *The Revolt of Islam* (1817). At the suit of Harriet's father he was deprived of the custody of his children by his first wife. This as well as the public hostility aroused by his conduct and opinions drove him abroad to Italy in 1818. Here he spent the remaining four years of life, living at Venice, Rome, Naples and Pisa. As in the case of Byron, Shelley's greatest works were produced during these years of exile in Italy: lyrical dramas *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas*, a tragedy, *The Cenci*, a love poem, *Epipsychidion* an elegy on the death of Keats, *Adonais*, and the great Nature lyrics, 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'The Cloud,' 'To a Skylark,' etc., by which he is best known today. He left, besides, numerous poems published during his life-time or after his death including the satires *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, *The Masque of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell the Third*; and lyrical pieces: *The Sensitive Plant*, *The Witch of Atlas*, etc. Of his prose writings the best known is his *Defence of Poetry*.

He was drowned in the gulf of Spezzia in July 1822 and cremated in the presence of Byron with whom he had been living. His ashes were buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome. Of his three children by Mary two died in childhood, while the third, a son, lived and

succeeded to the title. Of his two children by Harriet, only one, a daughter, lived to a good age. They had of course, no part in Shelley's life.

Queen Mab was written by Shelley at the age of 18. Though crude and immature in thought, it is a remarkable poem for a mere boy. The fairy queen Mab seats the spirit of the dead maiden Ianthe in her celestial car and soaring aloft in the high heavens shows her the Past, the Present, and the Future. The maiden sees in the ruins of Egypt, Athens, and Rome monuments of the desolation wrought by man's pride, ambition and ignorance. In the present she sees a living picture of human misery caused by the tyranny of kings and the falsehood of priests. The fairy queen shows these visions to the accompaniment of a tirade against all institutions—kings, religion, commerce, and marriage. God is execrated as the cause of so much bloodshed in his name. The fairy finally shows the maiden a glorious vision of the future in which 'All things are recreated, and the flame of consentaneous love inspires all life.' It is interesting to note that in this blissful state of a regenerate world love shall be free, 'Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,/ That virtue of the cheaply virtuous, who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.'

Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude, 'Alastor' (Gk.) means avenger. This, the first great work of Shelley's, is an extreme example of his wild imagination. The poet attracted by solitude withdraws from society and holds communion with himself. Then he desires to commune with a being like himself. Setting out on his quest he wanders over the world until he reaches the vale of Kashmir. There in a dream he is visited by a veiled maiden who answers to his ideal. She talked to him 'in low solemn tones' of 'knowledge and truth and virtue and lofty hopes of divine liberty/Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy/Herself a poet.' Then she sang a song to the accompaniment of 'some strange harp.' The poet enchanted by her beauty outstretched his arms to which she yielded. At this point the vision disappeared and he was roused from his trance. The rest of the poem describes the poet's fruitless quest of the visionary maiden and his death from frustration. So far the poem is a condemnation of self-centred seclusion and visionary idealism. The poet is destroyed by solitude, the avenger. But this is not all; it ends with the sad reflection that meaner men live on, while a rare genius, a 'surpassing Spirit' passes away leaving behind 'pale despair and cold tranquillity.' This ambivalence clearly shows that Shelley was fully alive to the dangers of impractical idealism, but could not help being a martyr to it. The poem is written in blank verse and shows the influence of Wordsworth in its descriptions of Nature. It is, however, marred by over-exuberant imagination, which makes the latter part hazy to the point of obscurity.

The Revolt of Islam. This poem was written in 1817 when Shelley was living at Marlow near London. The people of the neighbouring countryside were extremely poor—their poverty being aggravated by a bad harvest. The years immediately after the fall of Napoleon were

marked by reaction against liberty and reform, and nobody seemed to bother about the hunger and misery of the masses. The spectacle moved Shelley to pity and indignant fury. His aim in writing this his 'first serious appeal to the Public' was to rouse their conscience to the iniquity of a social order in which 'one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread.'

The poem written in Spenserian stanza is symbolic. It relates the story of a revolt led by the youth Laon and the maiden Cythna against the oppressors of the Islamic people. The revolt is only temporarily successful, for the tyrants gathering fresh forces take a terrible vengeance. Desolation stalks the land, bringing in its wake famine and plague. To avert these the superstitious rulers at the instigation of a priest burn thousands of infidels, including Laon and Cythna, at the stake. But the poem ends with an indication of 'the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue.' Laon and Cythna, symbolising genius and virtue rise from their ashes and are transported to the radiant isles of the blest.

The poem in twelve cantos is the longest of Shelley's works, and in parts confused and obscure.

Prometheus Unbound is a lyrical drama i.e. a lyrical poem cast in dramatic form. In Greek mythology Jupiter (or Zeus) was an oppressor of mankind. Prometheus championed their cause, stole for them fire from heaven and gave them knowledge and gifts of many arts. Jupiter revenged himself by chaining Prometheus to a rock of Mt. Caucasus where during the day a vulture devoured his heart which was renewed every night. There was a prophecy abroad in heaven that Jupiter's reign would soon come to an end. The secret of averting this was known only to Prometheus. Jupiter offered to release him from torture on the condition of his telling him the secret. Prometheus purchased his freedom by revealing the secret, which was that the offspring of Thetis would be greater than his father. Jupiter thereupon gave up the idea of marrying Thetis, and she was married to Peleus, who thus became the father of Achilles, the Greek hero of the Trojan War. The prophecy was fulfilled, for Achilles proved greater than his father.

Such was the catastrophe in the lost drama of Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound*. Shelley rejected this catastrophe (denouement or resolution of the plot) as unworthy of the champion of mankind. In his play, therefore, Prometheus remains unbending before the threats of Jupiter (typifying the Evil Principle) and refuses to purchase his pardon by communicating the secret. The result is that Jupiter marries Thetis and at the appointed hour Demogorgon, the Primal Power of the Universe ousts him from the throne. Hercules (typifying strength) frees Prometheus (typifying mankind) from the tortures resulting from evil done or permitted. Asia who is the wife of Prometheus and symbolises Nature is united to her husband (liberated Humanity) and resumes her youthful beauty. Love now reigns the

world, and tyranny, hatred, revenge, etc. are things of the past. Man becomes—

Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise, but man.

The theories of Creation that Shelley develops in this play are too abstruse for the average reader to follow. Even otherwise, the play is much too complex and abstract to be quite comprehensible.

Hellas. This lyrical drama was inspired by the Greek proclamation of independence followed by the Greek revolt against the Turkish rule (1821). Shelley was full of enthusiasm for the Greek cause and his prophecy of its success was fulfilled. He went wrong in particulars, for in the poem the English are shown as helping the Turks. The English did favour them in the beginning, but, of course, Shelley could not foresee that ultimately the English Navy would fight for the Greeks. The play is modelled on the *Persae* of Aeschylus depicting the Greek victory over the Persians. It is a much better play than the over-praised *Prometheus*. Being less abstract it comes nearer to human sympathies, and its lyrics are among the finest of Shelley's. The most beautiful of these is the last chorus.

Last Chorus of *Hellas*

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves screener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star;
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free,
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew
Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,

The splendour of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or heaven can give.

Saturn and love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than one who rose,
Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, nor blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy!

The world is weary of the past,
Oh might it die or rest at last!

Epipsychidion. The theme of this poem is Shelley's platonic love for a beautiful, sentimental, 'Italian lady of rank who was shut up in a convent till taken off her father's hands by a suitor without dowry.' The platonic love here pictured is quixotic in the extreme and it's no wonder that it should become 'chains of lead'—

The winged words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare universe,
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

The idealist's impatience of marriage which limits one's choice inspired the famous lines—

True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.

Mary Shelley had good reason to be jealous.

Adonais—An Elegy on the Death of Keats. The death of Keats moved Shelley not only to deep grief for the loss of one whom he regarded as one of the greatest poets of the age, but also to burning indignation at the savage criticism of the *Quarterly Review* on his *Endymion*, which he along with many others believed to have been the cause of his death. This poem gained from the fact that Shelley had a concrete subject—another's death. The first half of the poem, however, is as nebulous as any typical production of Shelley's, with its misty procession of mourners—Urania*, Dreams, Splendours, Desires, Adorations, Winge'd Persuasions, Veiled Destinies, Grooms, Glimmering incarnations of Hopes and Fears, Twilight Fantasies, Morning, Echo, Spring. Beautiful as all this is, we are more at home in the second half of the poem in which the author introduces the procession of the mourning poets: Byron, Moore, Shelley himself, and Leigh Hunt. Even in this, however, there is too much of the author himself—his hysterical self-pity which has little to do with the subject of the poem. Besides Shelley's predilection for abstractions leads to confusion of metaphors and incoherence. The light of the Universal

*Urania, the muse of astronomy, adopted here by Shelley as the muse of poetry.

Spirit is first a fire that beams, then a breath that descends on him (St. 54, 55). But it is perhaps hypercritical to point to these trivial defects in a poem which touches the heights of the sublime in poetry. *Adonais* easily takes its place among the great English elegies: *Lycidas*, *In Memoriam*, *Thyrsis*.

Nature Lyrics: Ode to the West Wind, To a Skylark, The Cloud.

Great as is *Adonais*, and fine as are the lyrics of *Hellas*, nowhere does Shelley rise higher in lyrical thought and music than in the above mentioned Nature lyrics. The 'Ode to the West Wind' is the general favourite. It embodies all the characteristic features of Shelley's poetic genius—his wild imagination, his self-pity and his prophetic passion. The awe-inspiring vision of a storm whose locks are 'Like the bright hair uplifted from the head/Of some fierce Maenad,' and the fantastic picture of the Mediterranean seeing 'in sleep old palaces and towers Quivering within the wave's intenser day/All overgrown with azure moss and flowers/So sweet the sense faints picturing them!'—there is nothing like this anywhere else in English poetry.

Such intensity of poetic energy, however, assorts ill with the note of self-pity in such a line as 'I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!' But his own misery does not impair his zeal for the happiness of his fellow-beings or his prophetic passion. In uttering these his voice is trumpet tongued—

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth;
And by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Between the 'West Wind' and the 'Skylark' the choice for the first place is hard. Each has its points. If the former has greater strength, the latter has greater delicacy and grace and with its trochaic metre, sweeter music.

IX

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
(Soul in secret hour)
With music sweet as love which overflows her bower.

X

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,

Scattering unbeholden
 Its aerial hue
 Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view.

XI

Like a rose embowered
 In its own green leaves,
 By warm winds deflowered,
 Till the scent it gives
 Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves.

XII

Sound of vernal showers
 On the twinkling grass,
 Rain-awakened flowers,
 All that ever was,
 Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

XIII

Teach us, spirit or bird,
 What sweet thoughts are thine;
 I have never heard
 Praise of love or wine
 That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

(From *To A Skylark*)

The note of despondency, though generalised and subdued, is not absent—

We look before and after,
 And pine for what is not,
 Our sincerest laughter
 With some pain in fraught,
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Nor does the poet forget his reformist mission—

Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden,
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not,
 Teach me half the gladness
 That thy brain must know;
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow.
 The world should listen then as I am listening now.

'The Cloud' is lighter and less serious than the other two, being just a succession of fanciful pictures untainted by Shelleyan despondency or reformist zeal.

The Sensitive Plant, also a Nature poem takes the form of a little allegorical tale embodying Shelley's neo-platonic transcendentalism. A sensitive plant (*Mimosa*) growing in a lovely garden is watered

and nursed lovingly by a beautiful lady—the ideal of Beauty that scatters love and delight. The sensitive plant, though it bears no bright flowers or fragrance, is extremely susceptible to love and beauty. It desires what it has not, 'the Beautiful.' The lady dies, and death and desolation descend on the garden. When the spring comes round the sensitive plant is a 'leafless wreck' in the midst of numerous loathsome weeds and nettles. The poet poses the question whether life, death, and change are real. According to him Beauty alone is real and permanent; all other things are unreal and subject to death and decay—

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery,
That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.
For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change: their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

The Witch of Atlas. In this poetical extravaganza we meet Shelley at his most fantastic. In a playful mood he invents the myth of a witch who is surpassingly beautiful—the daughter of Apollo. She lived in a cavern on Mt. Atlas. Her low voice was soft as love and attracted and tamed wild beasts, so that lions, leopards and serpents shed their savage natures in 'the magic circle of her voice and eyes.' She had a magic boat oared by enchanted wings that could sail not only mortal rivers but also the ethereal blue of the sky. High up in the heavens she would encamp above the clouds and play all kinds of pranks among the stars. From her high throne there she would sometimes come down to earth and play pranks among sleeping mortals. As she could see the spirit inside the body, she could distinguish between those who are most beautiful in spirit from others who are less beautiful. To the most beautiful she gave a 'strange panacea in a crystal bowl' drinking which during sleep, their bodies after death would know no decay. They would lie in their graves

'Mute, breathing, beating, warm and undecaying' beyond 'the rage of death or life,' while fleeting generations of mankind come and go in an endless cycle of birth and death.

For those who were less beautiful she had a gift of another kind. Upon the brains of these she would write strange dreams, as a result of which they would undo the evil they had done. The miser, for example, rising from his dream would shake 'all his evil gain' 'into a beggar's lap.' 'The lying scribe/would his own lies betray without a bribe.' The king would dress up a monkey in his royal robes, who seated on the throne would be kissed by his courtiers. The soldiers would beat their swords into plough-shares. The jailors

would free their liberal-minded prisoners, and unite long-parted friends and lovers.

The allegorical meaning of the poem is too plain to need any comment. If simplified, it would be a fine fairy tale for children.

Rosalind and Helen. This is a gloomy and confused tale of two women who become mothers outside marriage. For this they are punished by society; which tramples love, the first law of life. Priests come in for a scathing attack, for it is they who delude society with their selfish laws including the rite of marriage. Love and Truth can be restored in the world if only we will it.

Julian and Maddalo. This poem sums up a conversation between Julian (Shelley) and Byron (Maddalo) during Shelley's visit to Venice in 1818. After discussing man's power over his mind they visit a maniac Byron had met in a Venetian asylum. The maniac recounts the story of his unfortunate love. While exchanging notes later and Shelley expressing surprise at the poetic language used by the maniac, Byron remarked: 'Most wretched men/Are cradled into poetry by wrong. They learn in suffering what they teach in song.' The poem is interesting for two reasons; first, that it gives a very flattering picture of Byron, and second that it is written in a comparatively easy and familiar style, so unusual for Shelley.

The Satires: The Mask of Anarchy, Peter Bell the Third, Swellfoot the Tyrant.

The first, a satire on Castlereagh, was provoked by the Manchester (or Peterloo) massacre; the second a satire on Wordsworth was inspired by the publication of his poem of that name, and the third a satire on George IV, was provoked by the court scandals involving Queen Caroline. Of the three only *The Mask of Anarchy* is readable; the other two are intolerably dull. The satire on Wordsworth is called *Peter Bell the Third*, being successor to J.H. Reynold's parody, *Peter Bell the Second*. The satires and the events which they commemorate belong to the year 1819.

The Triumph of Life. This is a fragment of the last poem Shelley was writing when he died. It is a chaotic allegory of which the meaning is obscure. The poet reclining on a slope of the Apennine sees a vision: a public highway thronged by all sorts and conditions of men in mad pursuit of worldly objects. They are all shadows chained to the Triumphal Car of Life and they all fall by dusk—the great, the wise, and the unforgotten are vanquished by Life or its mystery. Rousseau interprets the pageant and there is a reference to Dante's message on returning from his visit to the Inferno, etc., that all earthly things are subject to change except 'Love which alone abides.'

To sum up, though not blameless in conduct, Shelley was a noble soul: loving and gentle, generous and unworldly in personal character. A visionary idealist with a passion for reforming the world, he carried on his one-man crusade against the tyranny of kings and

priests throughout his life. Considering that he was in dead earnest about his message reaching mankind at large, it might have been expected that he would write in a style that could be easily understood by those to whom it was addressed. Ironically enough, however, he wrote in a style exactly the reverse. Endowed more with imagination than good sense, he indulged in the airiest flights of fancy, discarding human interest, to revel in the fantastic ideas his wild and wayward imagination suggested. Flying on the wings of imagination he soars to dizzy heights unapproachable to the average reader. From those heights he like his sky-lark pours out melodies which enchant the ear without conveying much sense to the mind. Instead of presenting his ideals of beauty, love and liberty in familiar and sensible imagery, he clothes them with misty adstractions furthest removed from reality. To take only one example: The Cashmere maiden in *Alastor* rises to depart: 'At the sound he turned/And saw by the warm light of their own life/Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil/Of woven wind.' Let him who can visualise a veil of woven winds. His delineations of Nature too are marked by over-refinement and are not like Wordsworth's universal in their appeal. Popular poets compare the ideal with the real; Shelley loved to compare the real with the ideal. This practice, if kept within limits, as in the *Skylark*, is good art, but if pushed to the extremes, as in most of Shelley's poetry, it leads to cloudy confusion and obscurity. The theme is swamped by a brilliant conglomeration of myths, symbols and vague generalities, leaving the reader baffled and bewildered. He is oftener aware of a haunting charm of music and colour than of thought. The poet, he discovers, is chasing shadows—even shadows of shadows.

This inability to *realise*, to concretise, his subjects is the greatest drawback of Shelley's poetry. It is a poetry of dreams—vaguely beautiful dreams. There is in it little that is solid or substantial, little that is of human interest. It is this insubstantiality that made Matthew Arnold describe Shelley as 'a beautiful ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.' The angel would not have been so ineffectual if he had chosen subjects more suited to the public taste, had been less imaginative, less subtle and sophisticated in style. But he could not be induced to write down to the level of the common man's comprehension. The common man cannot live with him for long and leaves him severely alone. The recurring note of despondency in Shelley's poems is directly traceable to public neglect. As it is, Shelley remains a poet for the elect who style him 'the poet's poet' and his poetry 'pure poetry.' Wordsworth has somewhere said that he was aghast at the thought that out of twenty persons you meet, nineteen do not care for poetry. How many of the five percent who do care, care for 'pure poetry' is anybody's guess.

Apart from lack of substance, Shelley's poetry suffers from immaturity. Though he had moved away from the atheism of *Queen Mab* to the misty pantheism of *Prometheus Unbound* or the panthei-

stic mysticism of *Adonais*, the years did not bring any change in the rashness of his political and moral creed. The extravagance of thought as well as of lyrical raptures makes his poems mere rhapsodies.

Although Shelley said that 'didactic poetry is my abhorrence' and called his longer works narrative poems, they are one and all essentially lyrical in conception as in execution. He had no narrative gift; his stories have little movement and for the most part develop a single situation. Considering his self-centred nature and lack of objectivity his success in the tragedy of *The Cenci* is not a little surprising. If his attempts at satire were miserable failures it was because he had no sense of humour. To laugh successfully at others one must have the ability of laugh at oneself. Shelley took himself too seriously.

Nevertheless, when all that adverse criticism can say has been said, it must be admitted that Shelley is the greatest lyric singer in the English language outside Shakespeare. Such a combination of ebullient imagination, spontaneity and music as is displayed in the 'West Wind,' the 'Skylark,' the last chorus of *Hellas*, the stanzas on 'Dejection near Naples' and *Adonais* is nowhere else to be found.

III

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around;
Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned;
Nor fame nor power nor love nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

IV

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,—
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

(Stanzas written in *Dejection near Naples*)

XXXVII

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom which thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and self-contempt shall cling to thee,
Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

XLII

He is made one with Nature. There is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird,
 He is a presence to be felt and known
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone—
 Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own,
 Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness
 Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear
 His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
 Sweeps through the dull dense world; compelling there
 All new successions to the forms they wear;
 Torturing the unwilling dross, that checks its flight,
 To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
 And bursting in its beauty and its might
 From trees and beasts and men into the heaven's light.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
 Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought
 Far in the unapparent. Chatterton
 Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
 Yet faded from him: Sidney, as he fought,
 And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,
 Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot,
 Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved—
 Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on earth are dark,
 But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
 So long as life outlives the parent spark,
 Rose, robed in dazzling immortality. .
 'Thou art become as one of us,' they cry:
 'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
 Swung blind in unascended majesty,
 Silent alone amid an heaven of song.
 Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!

LII

The one remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly,
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
 Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
 Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
 The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

(From *Adonais*)

KEATS

Keats (1795-1821) who was the youngest of the trio of the second generation of romantic poets was also the first to die. His poetic

career lasted just five years, and yet he produced during that short period poems which are not only as wonderful as Shelley's but are of more enduring interest. Though similar in some respects—their immaturity and passion for beauty, their Hellenism—the two poets differ widely in others, and are even opposite to each other. Shelley, the visionary, soared in the skies; Keats though also a visionary in his own way was, nevertheless, more earth-bound. Shelley's verse is swift and rushing like his west wind; that of Keats moves with the slow, stately grace of a lady heavily decked with jewelry. Shelley's ideal of Beauty lay in the future; he saw in the past (specially the Middle Ages) and the present nothing but tyrannous kings and fraudulent priests. For Keats beauty had existed in the past, and though much of it had disappeared, some still remained to be enjoyed as well as gleaned by the poet's pen, for 'the poetry of earth is never dead.' The future lay with science which seemed to him to menace beauty, which could be captured by imagination, the only instrument of truth. Though both loved the art and mythology of ancient Greece, the Hellenism of Keats differs significantly from Shelley's. Shelley found in Greek myths symbols of heroic freedom, Keats those of beauty. Finally, the two differed fundamentally in their concept of the poet's role. Keats knew nothing of Shelley's zeal for reforming the world. He regarded poetry as the embodiment of beauty, and not as a vehicle of social or political theories. In a letter to Shelley he asked him to 'curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore.' Though the reputation of both stood very high after their death, it was not Shelley but Keats who determined the course of development of English poetry in the later nineteenth century.

John Keats was born in London in October 1795. His father, a stable-keeper, died when the boy was nine years old and his mother when he was fifteen. He was sent to a good school at Enfield where he was befriended by the master's son Charles Cowden Clarke later well known in literary circles. On leaving school in 1810 he was apprenticed to a surgeon, passed his examinations and practised surgery in London till 1817 when he gave up the profession and devoted himself to poetry. Though denied the advantage of public school and university culture, he was fortunate in being introduced by the Clarkes to such literary men as Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Haydon, Shelley and Godwin. The Clarkes lent him books including the *Fairy Queen* of Spenser, the poet who made a lasting impression on the poetry of Keats. In 1817 he published his first volume of poems, which was not a success. In 1818 appeared his *Endymion* which was mercilessly criticised by the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. By this time signs of consumption, from which his mother and a brother had died, began to show themselves in him. Nevertheless he kept up his labours and during the next two years produced his best work which appeared in his third volume, *Lamia, Isabella, and other Poems* (1820). His disease which had now taken a firm grip on him was aggravated by a violent passion for Fanny Brawne, and

he left for Italy in September 1820 accompanied by his friend, the painter Severn. He died at Rome in February 1821 at the age of 25. He was buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome and on his tomb is the inscription made by himself: *Here lies one whose name was writ in water.*

Works. Three volumes of verse were published during the life-time of Keats: the first in 1817, the second (*Endymion*) in 1818 and the third, which contained his best work, in 1820.

The 1817 volume contained two notable pieces: the sonnet on 'Chapman's Homer,' and 'Sleep and Poetry.' The first sonnet is too well known to need much comment. To Keats who knew no Greek Chapman's Homer in English must have been a revelation. The 'Sleep and Poetry' expresses Keats's poetic aspirations. Here is an example—

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed.
Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass,
Feed upon the apples red and strawberries,
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees;
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,
Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white
Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
As hard as lips can make it: till agreed,
A lovely tale of human life we'll read.
And one will teach a tame dove how it best
May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest;
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
Will set a green robe floating round her head,
And still will dance with ever varied ease,
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees:
Another will entice me on, and on
Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon;
Till in the bosom of leafy world
We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd
In the recess of a pearly shell.

Keats was happy over the dawn of a new age in poetry—

Fine sounds are floating wild
About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

But he was against the poetry of force and violence such as that of Shelley's *Queen Mab* and *The Revolt of Islam*; 'for it feeds upon the burrs/and thorns of life; forgetting the great end/Of poesy, that it should be a friend/To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.' He also attacks in this poem the Augustan School of poetry.

The 1818 volume was *Endymion*. It was fiercely attacked by the *Quarterly Review* and the *Blackwood's Magazine*. The *Blackwood*

called it "calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy." The attack was due largely to the Tory's hostility to the radical Leigh Hunt and the 'Cockney School of Poetry' of which Keats was supposed to be a member. Keats belonged to no school either literary or political. He was, however, strongly influenced in his earlier poetry by Leigh Hunt, a minor poet whose mawkish sentimentality and loose style of versification proved disastrous for Keats. The set love-scenes in *Endymion* show lapses of taste, and its over-lapped or enjambed couplets are responsible for the chaotic movement of the story.

Endymion. In Greek mythology, Endymion, a beautiful shepherd of Mt. Latmos in Caria, is loved by Artemis (Diana, Cynthia, Phoebe) the moon-goddess. She contrives to throw him into a perpetual sleep and comes down every night to embrace him.

In his *Endymion* Keats spins out this myth to an inordinate length (4,000 lines) by adding marvellous details of his own invention. Endymion is visited by the goddess a number of times in idyllic surroundings and he has his heart's fill of bliss. During the intervals, maddened with love, he is distracted by alternate moods of hope and despair. In his quest of the goddess in all regions of earth, air, and sea, he among other wonderful experiences comes across other famous lovers of mythology: Venus and Adonis, Glaucus and Scylla, Arethusa and Alpheus. After suffering protracted tantalising and delayings during which he has won the good-will of Zeus (Jove, Jupiter) and Venus by his constancy in love, he is spiritualised and carried away by the goddess to heaven.

The story related by Endymion to his sister Peona is rambling and complicated and makes the allegory (the soul's passion for Beauty) obscure. The poet starts with the question: "Wherein lies our happiness?" It lies, he says, in the pursuit of divine fellowship, of oneness with God. But man, he continues, succumbs to the "self-destroying, richer entanglements of the world." The conclusion of the poem, suggests that steadfast love makes man immortal.

In his Preface to the poem, Keats says that it was "a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished." He disarms criticism by admitting its many defects arising from his inexperience, immaturity, mawkishness, etc., to which one can add little except incoherence and volubility. The poem, however, has the stamp of a promising genius. Its famous passages are given at the end of this article.

Lamia (1820). The story is from the Greek of Philostratus (2nd-3rd century A.D.) found in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Lamia, a witch (with serpent's head and woman's mouth) is transformed by Hermes (Mercury) into a beautiful maiden in return for revealing to him a beautiful nymph he was seeking. (Because of the nymph's exceeding beauty the witch had made her invisible to 'the love-glances of unlovely eyes'.) Hermes disappears with the nymph into the woods and Lamia makes her way to Corinth where lives the youth Lycius whom she loves. Enchanted by her beauty Lycius takes her home secretly, avoiding particularly his teacher Apollonius on the way.

After living in perfect bliss for some time he decides much against Lamia's wishes, to hold a wedding feast to which are invited all his friends except Apollonius. A magnificent banquet is laid out by the invisible spirits controlled by Lamia. The guests arrive, among them the uninvited philosopher Apollonius. He sees through Lamia's disguise and fixing his eyes 'full on the alarmed beauty of the bride' calls her 'a serpent.' Upon this 'with a frightful scream she vanished.'

The allegorical meaning of the poem is contained in the famous lines—

Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

After admitting that *Endymion* was 'slipshod' Keats studied Dryden carefully with the result that the couplets of *Lamia* are more compact.

Isabella or The Pot of Basil (1820). The story is based on Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

The love of Isabella, a Florentine maiden, and Lorenzo, an employee in the commercial house of her two brothers, is discovered. The purse-proud brothers enraged at Lorenzo's presuming to love above his station, decoy him to a forest where they murder him and bury his body. The crime is revealed to Isabella by Lorenzo's ghost, whereupon she finds the body, brings home the severed head and places it in a flower-pot, covering it with a plant of basil. Noticing her great devotion to the basil, the brothers steal the pot and examining it discover the head. Horrified they leave Florence in haste never to return. Isabella dies of grief. The poem is written in ottava rima. In language and style it has a primitive simplicity suited to its medieval setting.

The Eve of St. Agnes (1820). Madeleine has been told by aged dames that young virgins might have visions of their lovers at midnight upon St. Agnes' Eve (January 20) if they performed due ceremonies, went to bed supperless, etc. Her lover Porphyro belongs to a hostile family and her castle is strongly guarded. The night is bitterly cold and a storm is raging outside. Madeleine who had retired early from the dancing and revelry in the castle-hall is asleep in her chamber. Porphyro arrives at the castle-gate and is let into Madeleine's chamber by the old nurse Angela. Madeleine who has been dreaming of Porphyro awakes and finds him by her bedside. The inmates and guards being in drunken sleep in the small hours of the morning, the lovers escape unheeded into the storm. The poem, written in

Spenserian stanza, is not only the finest of Keats's narrative poems, but also one which most fully illustrates the distinctive qualities of his romanticism—his sensuousness and his passion for the Middle Ages. The medieval superstition, the ancient Beadsman with benumbed fingers telling his rosary, the castle filled with 'barbarian hordes, Hyena foemen and hot-headed lords' ready to pounce on the lover should he venture near, the passion of the lover who braves the storm and risks his life in a hostile citadel—all the trappings of medievalism have been caught and depicted with the unerring instinct of a specialist. As for sensuousness, it would be hard to find parallels, even in Keats's other poems, for the enchanting descriptions of Madeleine's chamber and the mouth-watering delicacies that Porphyro heaps upon her bedside table. No illustrative quotations can do justice to the beauty of this poem. It must be read in whole.

Hyperion. Keats wrote this poem in two versions, the second styled the *Fall of Hyperion*, but completed neither. Both are written in Miltonic blank verse and were probably given up either because Keats realized that he could not keep up the Miltonic severity through the projected ten or twelve cantos or that he could not muster enough thought to fill them.

In Greek mythology the older generation of gods headed by Saturn (Gk. Cronus) is defeated by the newer headed by Zeus (Roman Jupiter). Zeus and his brothers (all sons of Cronus or Saturn) divide the universe by casting lots. Zeus gets heaven, Poseidon the sea, and Hades the underworld. In the version of Keats after they have been overthrown, Saturn and the other Titans are debating how to recover their lost power and pin their hopes on Hyperion (the sun or sun-god) who is still reigning. He visits them but they read their doom in his dejected face. The young Apollo who is to vanquish Hyperion is introduced and the fragment ends.

In the other version of the poem, the poet is granted an allegorical dream or vision in which he arrives at a temple of Saturn. Moneta (Juno) 'the pale Omega of a withered race' and the sole priestess of that temple reveals to him the fall of Hyperion, the last of the Titans, who is deposed by Apollo. The tale, however, breaks off before the revelation is complete.

The allegorical meaning of the poem is contained in the first version and is put in the mouth of Oceanus, the fallen sea-god. His reasoning may be summed up as follows:

"My fallen bretheren, it's folly to mourn the loss of our power. Just as our parents, Heaven and Earth (Uranus and Ge), 'fairer far than Chaos and blank darkness' had displaced these former gods, so did we, purer and more beautiful than our parents, displace them. Why grieve then if we, in our turn, are now dispossessed of our realms by our children, who excel us in power and beauty? It's the eternal law/That first in beauty should be first in might."

The Odes: 'To a Nightingale', 'On a Grecian Urn', 'On Melancholy', 'To Autumn', 'To Psyche', 'Bards of Passion and of Mirth'.

The 'Ode to a Nightingale' will be read with added interest if we keep in mind the condition of the poet at the time when it was composed. Of his two younger brothers to whom he was deeply attached, George had emigrated to America, and Tom died of consumption towards the close of 1818. This was a serious blow to Keats whose own disease had come to the surface during his tour of Scotland, a few months before. Both brothers gone, and he himself under sentence of death—such was the state of the poet's mind in the Spring of 1819 when this Ode was written. Another circumstance worth remembering is that the nightingale whose song sent Keats into a trance was one that had built her nest close to his house.

In the third stanza the poet refers to his brother's death and possibly also to his own near-death condition in the line—'Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin and dies'. The poet's heartache is caused by his perception of the contrast between the transitoriness of life and the eternity of the nightingale's song. This is, of course, a fallacy; but by a poetic licence the bird is treated not as an individual but as a type.

The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', written the same year, is also an expression of the same sad reflection. Here the contrast is between the transitoriness of human joys and the eternity of art. The scenes depicted on the urn—the lover chasing his beloved, etc.—have been immortalised by art, and will never know life's vicissitudes and decay. This 'cold pastoral' teaches and will continue to teach generations yet unborn the lesson that "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," for beauty like truth (God, Reality) is eternal.

The 'Ode on Melancholy' is of the same order as the two noticed above, born of the same mood of tender sadness. The poet feels that there is a blight upon everything that is lovely and joyful—the morning rose the rainbow, the 'peerless eyes' of one's sweetheart—and every 'aching Pleasure nigh' turns to poison.

The 'Ode to Autumn', which strikes a different and more pleasing note belongs to this same year. No other poem of Keats expresses more eloquently his simple, unalloyed love of nature. The poet takes his fill of the riches the teeming earth offers to her children in autumn, the "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" without allowing thoughts of spring, past or future to disturb his enjoyment—

"Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? Think not of them; thou hast thy music too". It is a mood of sober contentment.

The 'Ode to Psyche' celebrates the classical love story of Cupid and Psyche—the maiden who was so beautiful as to arouse the jealousy of Venus herself. Both in its visionary touch and voluptuous style—the poem recalls *Endymion*.

Ode on 'Bards of Passion and of Mirth' (written on the blank page before Beaumont and Fletcher's tragi-comedy—*The Fair Maid of the Inn*).

This is a short poem on the great poets of the past. They have, says Keats, two souls—one in heaven the other on earth, enshrined in their works. Through these they teach us wisdom every day.

The 1820 volume also contained the well-known 'Lines on the Mermaid Tavern'—the tavern frequented by Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher and other Elizabethan poets.

Posthumous and Fugitive Poems. Besides the three volumes of poetry noticed above, Keats left a large number of poems which were published after his death. These include the sonnet on 'Human Seasons' the lovely three stanzas beginning 'In a drear-nighted December', 'Meg Merrilies' and the uncompleted 'Eve of St. Mark'. That Keats was not without a sense of humour is testified by his sonnet 'To a Cat', 'A Song about Myself', 'Ben Nevis, a Dialogue' (the dialogue is between a lady and the mountain Ben Nevis) and the unfinished burlesque fairy tale 'The Cap and Bells'. Two dramatic experiments, *Otho the Great*, a tragedy in five acts and *King Stephen*, a fragment of a tragedy, complete the tale.

Keats's Last Sonnet. That Keats who overflowed with words could exercise restraint when he chose is amply illustrated by his sonnets. His last sonnet was written on the journey to Italy. Perfect in art, it nevertheless shows that he lost all self-control whenever he wrote to or about his betrothed.

To sum up, for a just appraisal of the poetic genius of Keats it is important at the very outset to clear our minds of a popular misconception of his character which unfortunately still persists, nearly one hundred and fifty years after his death. His friends, the luckless painter, Haydon, started the story that Keats 'was a victim of personal abuse and want of nerve to bear it'. The story was made popular by Byron and Shelley. Byron wrote in *Don Juan*, though in a lighthearted manner, that Keats was 'snuffed out by an article'. Shelley swallowed the story and hurled thundering denunciations and curses on the head of the *Quarterly* reviewer in his *Adonais*. There is no truth in the story, but it has somehow got fixed in popular fancy. Keats's letters, quoted so discriminatingly by Matthew Arnold in his well-known essay on Keats (*Ward's English Poets*, Vol IV) establish beyond doubt that Keats was too manly and independent a character to be killed by an article. He must have winced a little, but he was confident of his powers and was on the whole indifferent to praise or blame. To his brother George he said, "This is a mere matter of the moment. I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." Letters apart, the manly and candid preface to *Endymion* should be sufficient to show that he had enough self-criticism to know his weaknesses and was resolved to overcome them. He once said that 'Poetry must surprise by a *une excess*'. He now realized that he had overworked this formula in *Endymion* and determined by self-discipline to curb his luxuriance. That he succeeded is testified by the master-pieces that followed—'The Eve of St. Agnes', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', 'Hyperion'.

and the Odes. They provide unmistakable evidence of his maturity attained by him in the brief space of less than two years. He had 'grown' in feeling as well as in style. The classical severity of *Hyperion* drew high tributes from Byron and Shelley, while economy of words and restraint of feeling combine to make 'La Belle' one of the most perfect of English ballads. The rich beauty of 'St. Agnes Eve' may be a little cloying to some tastes, but it blends perfectly with the romantic atmosphere of this loveliest of Keats's poems. The Odes, too, are perfect models of artistic organisation in their just balance between feeling and expression.

It is a commonplace of criticism that Keats is deficient in thought. He would have supplied this deficiency had he lived longer. He had the stuff in him. The fact that he identified Beauty with Truth is proof enough that he had stepped on the road to wisdom. Had he travelled farther on that road he might have learnt that Truth (Imperishable Reality or God) has many facets, and though Beauty is one of them, it is not 'all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know'.

The qualities of Keats's romanticism are easier to indicate than Shelley's. They are sensuousness, Hellenism, medievalism and melancholy pessimism. Sensuousness, which present in an extreme form bordering on sensuality in *Endymion*, is strongly marked in all his work. He had a fine relish for beauty that appeals to the senses—all senses including taste, touch and smell and not merely sight and hearing to which other poets confine themselves. Whatever his subjects—beauty in Nature or art, beauty in the myths of ancient Greece, the beauty of medieval romance—it is the pleasures of the senses that attract him. 'O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts', he exclaims in one of his letters. Thought was painful to him as it disturbed the simple enjoyment of wine, love, song, Nature. As a poet he conceived it to be his duty to render these sensations in words. His poetry is accordingly made up of a series of pictures or word-paintings of scenes of sensuous beauty. With one important difference this is as true of the imagined scenes of myth and romance as of the physical world of Nature. That important difference is that while the mythological or romantic stories have an allegorical or symbolic meaning, however, imperfectly realised, no such meaning attaches to his Nature poems. While Wordsworth heard in Nature 'the still, sad, music of humanity' and Shelley made the West Wind a trumpet of his prophecy, Keats was content to love Nature for its own sake. His had a simple, straightforward passion for Nature and he gave his whole soul to the pure, unalloyed enjoyment of its sensuous beauty.

What is remarkable about the scenes painted by Keats's pictorial imagination is that they are not vague or merely suggestive: except in 'La Belle' they are made definite with a wealth of detail and in language as rich and colourful as only Keats could make it. Every stanza, every line, is replete with beauty. No other poet except Shakespeare shows such a mastery of language and felicity of phrase.

Though he loved Nature passionately, Keats's love of the past—the world of Greek myths and medieval romance—was even greater. Greek mythology, in particular, had for him a peculiar fascination. Though he knew no Greek and such knowledge of ancient Greece as he possessed was derived only from Chapman's *Homer* and Lemprier's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, the scenes in *Endymion*, *Hyperion* and the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* are, in the eyes of scholars, the most Greek things in English. Similarly, though he knew the Middle Ages only through Spenser, Chaucer, and Boccaccio, the 'Eve of St. Agnes' and 'La Belle' are as genuinely medieval as anything in English. With his instinctive understanding Keats was able to catch the thought, sentiment, atmosphere—the whole spirit—of antiquity.

The melancholy pessimism which Keats has in common with other romantic poets and which is most deliciously indulged in the 'Nightingale' ode, was in his case due, first, to the feeling that glory and loveliness of the old world of myth and romance have passed away, and secondly, to the awareness that life and its joys are so short-lived. Death was to him an easy escape from a world of harsh realities—a world—

Where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

The death-wish is a recurrent note in Keats as in Shelley, and is definitely a sign of weakness, if not of morbidity.

Shelley calls Keats one of 'the inheritors of unfulfilled renown'. True, he was cut off just when he was maturing and promised great things; but could he have improved upon such things as the 'Eve', 'La Belle' the 'Nightingale Ode', his last sonnet? It is probable that had he been granted a few more years, his work would have gained in intellectual and spiritual content; but is it at all necessary to speculate on what might have been? The work he has left behind is supreme in its kind—the poetry of sensuous beauty—and criticism cannot demand more from any writer. Keats is original and unique and has an assured place among the great English poets.

Historically, his influence on succeeding English poets has been incalculable. It is shown in (a) wide exploration of antiquity for search of subjects—classical, medieval and miscellaneous, (b) simple, direct and non-spiritual treatment of Nature, (c) union of colourful language and music, and (d) over-all artistic finish. Some extracts from Keats's poems follow.

Beauty



A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
 Its loveliness increases; it will never
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
 Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
 Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
 From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
 Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
 For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
 With the green world they live in; and clear rills
 That for themselves a cooling covert make
 'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
 Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
 And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
 We have imagined for the mighty dead;
 All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
 An endless fountain of immortal drink,
 Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

(From *Endymion*, Book 1)

Hymn to Pan

O Harkener to the loud clapping shears,
 While ever and anon to his shorn peers
 A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn
 When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
 Anger our huntsman: Breather round our farms,
 To keep off mildews, and all weather harms:
 Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
 That come a swooning over hollow grounds,
 And wither drearily on barren moors:
 Dread opener of the mysterious doors
 Leading to universal knowledge—see,
 Great son of Dryope,
 The many that are come to pay their vows
 With leaves about their brows!

(From *Endymion*, Book 1)

The Flight

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
 She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
 Save wings, for heaven—Porphyro grew faint:
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
 In blanch'd linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;

With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
 And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
 From Fez: and spiced dainties, every one,
 From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

(From *The Eve of St. Agnes*)

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
 Already with thee! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
 But here there is no light,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

(From 'Ode to a Nightingale')

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not the bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st:
 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

(From 'Ode on a Grecian Urn')

Sonnets

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene

Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
 Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

(‘On First Looking into Chapman’s Home’)

Keats’s Last Sonnet—

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like Nature’s patient sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth’s human shores,
 Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
 No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillowed upon my fair love’s ripening breast,
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest;
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live—or else swoon to death.

MINOR POETS OF THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

Besides the seven poets surveyed above there were during the same period many others who can receive but summary treatment in this chapter. They are a mixed lot: some had the 18th century leaven, others looked forward to the Victorian period, but by and large they were all touched by the romantic spirit, some more, some less. Though most of them are now forgotten, quite a few survive today in their shorter pieces, mostly lyrics or songs.

Landor, Leigh Hunt, Macaulay—these three are more important as prose-writers, but they had no mean poetic gifts which were exercised in a variety of forms. Landor was a scholar with a marked bent for the classical. He treats romantic subjects in a classical style distinguished for its grace. The best examples are found in his ‘Epigrams’ i.e. short pithy poems, neatly turned out, on a single mood, incident, scene, etc.

Leigh Hunt has been mentioned in connection with Keats. His romantic excesses which influenced the earlier Keats may be seen in his longer verse tale the *Story of Rimini* which is now dead. He is remembered today by the pretty moral sentimental poem, *Abou Ben Adhem*, familiar to school boys. His gush is also exemplified by his short roundeau, *Jenny Kissed Me*.

Macaulay has been under a shadow ever since Matthew Arnold dismissed him as a Philistine. True, his ideas and sentiments are commonplace and his verse is rather hard in tone, but it is unfair to say that his *Lays of Ancient Rome* are not poetry. The spirited

rhetoric and vivid historical imagination that characterise all Macaulay's writing make the *Lays* still enjoyable. His *Epitaph on a Jacobite* is instinct with patriotism as well as pathos.

Moore, Campbell, Hood—these three Thomases are majors in the numerous minority. Theirs are the best songs of the period. Moore who attained great fame in his day with his Indian tale of *Lalla Rookh* and *Irish Melodies* is now remembered chiefly by his short lyrics, the best of which have a tender elegiac charm. He was good at drollery too, as may be seen in the Ode to his Baby son. Moore was a musician as well as a poet, and his songs can be set to music. By his *Irish Melodies* he did for Ireland what Burns had done for Scotland. Campbell who made his name by *The Pleasures of Hope* and *Gertrude of Wyoming* a verse-tale in the manner of Scott, is remembered by these war-songs: *Hohenlinden*, *The Battle of the Baltic*, and *Ye Mariners of England*.

Hood, poor and struggling all his life, had a flair for writing songs, both comic and serious. His serious poetry is best exemplified in his famous short poems: *The Bridge of Sighs* and *The Song of the Shirt*. Both of these were inspired by social misery and poverty. They are touching poems, the former dealing with a fallen woman who commits suicide, and the latter with a seamstress worked almost to death.

Moore and Hood, who excelled in serious as well as non-serious songs, may jointly form the nucleus of two groups of poets: one of song writers proper, and the other of light, witty verse. To the group of song writers belong Darley, Beddoes, Proctor and Hogg; to the group of humorists, Praed, the pair James and Horace Smith and Barham.

George Darley and Thomas Beddoes take their inspiration from Shelley and the Elizabethan dramatists. They wrote poetic dramas which are interesting chiefly because of the exquisite songs imbedded in them.

Darley's comical *Sylvia or The May Queen* has affinities with Beaumont and Fletcher, but Beddoes's grim *The Bride's Tragedy* and *Death's Jest-Book* are steeped in the spirit of Webster and Tour-nier. Beddoes was mad, and death being his favourite theme, it is not surprising he died by his own hand. Darley, though less original, is better known as the author of a song ('It is not beauty I demand') which Palgrave mistook for an anonymous lyric of the Caroline period and included in the *Golden Treasury* under the 17th century. When the authorship was discovered, the song was removed from the book altogether—a strange proceeding, to say the least.

Bryan Waller Proctor better known for his friendship with celebrities like Lamb, Hazlitt and Dickens, wrote songs under the pseudonym of 'Barry Cornwall', but few of them are remembered today.

James Hogg, known as 'the Ettrick Shepherd' was a shepherd by profession, but had real poetic gifts. He furnished material to Scott

for his *Border Minstrelsy* and made his reputation by *The Queen's Wake* as well as by songs, the best being 'The Boy's Song'.

In the humorous group Winthrop Mackworth Praed, a high Government official, is supreme as a writer of 'verse of society'. His epigrammatic wit is illustrated by such a couplet as this—

And some grow rich by telling lies,
And some by telling money (counting)

His best pieces are 'The Letter of Advice' by one Miss to another and *The Vicar*.

The Smith pair wrote the memorable *Rejected Addresses* parodying the styles of the popular poets of the day—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Moore, Scott, etc. The appropriateness and humour of the parodies made this book extremely popular.

Richard Harris Barham, an elderly clergyman, wrote over a number of years a series of burlesque tales in verse displaying great humour and narrative power. First appearing in magazines, they were collected later under the title of *Ingoldsby Legends*, Thomas Ingoldsby being the pen name of the author. They were immensely popular throughout the century, though the Church frowned on some of the legends as being irreverent.

To the Moore-Hood group of singers may be added the three poetesses of the period: Joana Baillie, Mrs. Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon (L.E.L.). Joana Baillie, a friend of Scott won her reputation by her dramas, the most popular being *Plays of the Passions*. A simple and homely poet she is remembered by her songs, the best known of which is *The Outlaw's Song* ('The chough and crow to roost are gone'). Mrs. Hemans was extremely popular in her day and is now chiefly remembered for the schoolboy poem of *Casabianca* ('The boy stood on the burning deck'). L.E.L. who died by accidental poisoning is all but forgotten.

Others who form a miscellaneous group can be barely named. John Keble, author of the *Christian Year* combines love of Nature with Christian sentiment. William Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet, wrote chiefly in the Dorset dialect on domestic and rural subjects (death of a wife, death of a child, etc). The two farmer poets Robert Bloomfield and John Clare show Wordsworthian touches in their descriptions of Nature. Ebenezer Elliott, a sheffield labourer, is known as the 'Corn-Law Rhymer' from his *Corn-Law Rhymes*—vigorous poems on working-class life. Hartley Coleridge, the luckless son of a luckless father, is remembered by a few sonnets. Samuel Rogers was a rich banker, noted more for his parties than poems. Sir Henry Taylor and Richard Hengist Horne were dramatic poets. Horne may be remembered as the writer of *Orion*—a 'farthing epic' because it was published at that uneconomic price. Charles Wolfe is perhaps the best remembered of this miscellaneous group as the author of *The Burial of Sir John Moore*.

Illustrative extracts from the Minor Poets are given below:

Hohenlinden

On Linden, when the sun was low,
 All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,
 And dark as winter was the flow
 Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden saw another sight,
 When the drum beat at dead of night,
 Commanding fires of death to light
 The darkness of her scenery.

By torch and trumpet fast arrayed,
 Each horseman drew his battle blade,
 And furious every charger neighed,
 To join the dreadful revelry.

Then shook the hills with thunder riven
 Then rushed the steed to battle driven
 And louder than the bolts of heaven,
 Far flashed the red artillery.

But redder yet that light shall glow,
 On Linden's hills of stained snow,
 And bloodier yet the torrent flow
 Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

'Tis morn, but scarce yon level sun
 Can pierce the war-clouds, rolling dun,
 Where furious Frank and fiery Hun
 Shout in their sulphurous canopy.

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,
 Who rush to glory, or to grave!
 Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave!
 And charge with all thy chivalry!

Few, few, shall part where many meet!
 The snow shall be their winding sheet,
 And every turf beneath their feet
 Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

Thomas Campbell

Oft in the Stilly Night

Oft, in the stilly night,
 Ere Slumber's Chain has bound me,
 Fond Memory brings the light
 Of other days around me;
 The smiles, the tears,
 Of boyhood's years,
 The words of love then spoken;
 The eyes that shone,
 Now dimm'd and gone,
 The cheerful hearts now broken!
 Thus, in the stilly night,
 Ere Slumber's chain has bound me,
 Sad Memory brings the light
 Of other days around me.

When I remember all
 The friends, so link'd together,
 I've seen around me fall,

Like leaves in wintry weather;
 I feel like one
 Who treads alone
 Some banquet-hall deserted,
 Whose lights are fled,
 Whose garlands dead,
 And all but he departed!
 Thus, in the stilly night,
 Ere Slumber's chain has bound me,
 Sad Memory brings the light
 Of other days around me.

Thomas Moore, from *National Airs*

The Bridge of Sighs

One more Unfortunate,
 Weary of breath,
 Rashly importunate,
 Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
 Lift her with care;
 Fashion'd so slenderly,
 Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
 Clinging like cerements;
 Whilst the wave constantly
 Drips from her clothing;
 Take her up instantly,
 Loving, not loathing—

Touch her not scornfully:
 Think of her mournfully,
 Gentle and humanly;
 Not of the stains of her,
 All that remains of her
 Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
 Into her mutiny
 Rash and undutiful;
 Past all dishonour,
 Death has left on her
 Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
 One of Eve's family—
 Wipe those poor lips of hers
 Oozing so clammy.

Loop up her tresses
 Escaped from the comb,
 Her fair auburn tresses;
 Whilst wonderment guesses
 Where was her home?

Who was her father?
 Who was her mother?
 Had she a sister?
 Had she a brother?
 Or was there a dearer one
 Still, and a nearer one
 Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!
Oh! it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery
Swift to be hurl'd—
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!
Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently,—kindly—
Smooth, and compose them,
And her eyes, close them
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,

Into her rest—
 Cross her hands humbly,
 As if praying dumbly,
 Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
 Her evil behaviour,
 And leaving, with meekness,
 Her sins to her Saviour!

Thomas Hood

The Song of the Shirt

With fingers weary and worn,
 With eyelids heavy and red,
 A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
 Plying her needle and thread—
 Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
 In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
 She sang the 'Song of the Shirt.'

'Work! work! work!
 Till the brain begins to swim;
 Work—work—work
 Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
 Seam, and gusset, and band,
 Band, and gusset, and Seam,
 Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
 And sew them on in a dream!

'Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
 Oh, men, with Mother and Wives!
 It is not linen you're wearing out,
 But human creatures' lives!
 Stitch—stitch—stitch,
 In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
 Sewing at once, with a double thread,
 A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

But why do I talk of Death?
 That Phantom of grisly bone,
 I hardly fear its terrible shape,
 It seems so like my own—
 It seems so like my own,
 Because of the fasts I keep;
 Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
 And flesh and blood so cheap!

'Work—work—work!
 My labour never flags;
 And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
 A crust of bread—and rags
 That shatter'd roof and this naked floor—
 A table—a broken chair—
 And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
 For sometimes falling there!

'Work—work—work!
 From weary chime to chime,
 Work—work—work—
 As prisoners work for crime!
 Band, and gusset, and seam,

Seam, and gusset, and band,
Til the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

'Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show me their sunny backs,
And twit me with the spring.

'Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet;
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

'Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief:
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!'

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch—
Would that its tone could reach the Rich—
She sang this 'Song of the Shirt!'

Casabianca

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him o'er the dead;
Yet beautiful and bright he stood
As born to rule the storm!
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though child-like form!

The flames roll'd on—he would not go
Without his Father's word;
That Father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.
He call'd aloud: 'Say, father, say
If yet my task is done!'
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

'Speak, father!' once again he cried,
 'If I may yet be gone!'
 And but the booming shots replied,
 And fast the flames roll'd on.
 Upon his brow he felt their breath,
 And in his waving hair;
 And look'd from that lone post of death
 In still, yet brave, despair;
 And shouted but once more aloud,
 'My, father! must I stay?'
 While o'er him fast through sail and shroud,
 The wreathing fires made way.
 They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
 They caught the flag on high,
 And stream'd above the gallant child
 Like banners in the sky.
 There came a burst of thunder—sound—
 The boy—O! where was he?
 —Ask of the winds that far around
 With fragments strewed the sea,
 With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
 That well had borne their part;
 But the noblest thing which perish'd there
 Was that young faithful heart!

Mrs. Hemans

Rondeau

Jenny kissed me when we met,
 Jumping from the chair she sat in;
 Time, you thief, who love to get
 Sweets into your list, put that in:
 Say I'm weary, say I'm sad.
 Say that health and wealth have missed me,
 Say I'm growing old, but add,
 Jenny kissed me.

Leigh Hunt

Ah! what avails the sceptered race!
 Ah! what the form divine!
 What every virtue, every grace!
 Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
 Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
 May seek, but never see
 A night of memories and sighs
 I consecrate to thee.

Landor

On Himself

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
 Nature! I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
 I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
 It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Landor

He did not think all mischief fair,
 Although he had a knack of joking;
 He did not make himself a bear,
 Although he had a taste for smoking;
 And when religious sects ran mad,
 He held in spite of all his learning.
 That if a man's belief is bad,
 It will not be improved by burning.

Praed, from *The Vicar*

Dirge For Wolfram

If thou wilt ease thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then sleep, dear, sleep;
And not a sorrow
Hang any tear on your eyelashes;
Lie still and deep,
Sad soul, until the sea-wave washes
The rim o' the sun tomorrow,
In eastern sky.

But wilt thou cure thine heart
Of love and all its smart,
Then die, dear, die;
'Tis deeper, sweeter,
Than on a rose-bank to lie dreaming
With folded eye;
And there alone, amid the beaming
Of Love's stars, thou'lt meet her
In eastern sky.

Beddoes, *Death's Jest Book*, Act II

CHAPTER 35

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH: THE NOVEL

Jane Austen : Novelist of manners par excellence—Her unsurpassed gift of making the ordinary and commonplace exciting—Her principal charm in her ironical characterisation—Her sheer authenticity—Scott: Creator of the historical novel—His novels are history made picturesque—His classic characters—His political philosophy in the Scotch novels—The wholesome influence of his ideals of chivalry—Lesser novelists: Miss Edgeworth, Miss Jane Porter, Miss Susan Ferrier, John Galt, Peacock, Marryat, Lever, and others.

Jane Austen (1775-1817). Of the two great novelists of the Romantic period, Jane Austen and Walter Scott, only the latter expressed the romantic feeling. Jane Austen chose to be anti-romantic and followed the example of Fanny Burney who had achieved notable success in portraying social and domestic life in her *Evelina*.

In doing so she gave to the novel of manners a new dimension by the subtlety and complexity of her characterisation, her sharp irony and delicate satire, her brilliant wit and gentle humour, her clear style and structural perfection. Though the novel of manners has been written on a large scale, no practitioner of the art has to this day achieved the same distinction. She is not only the greatest novelist of manners in English; she is unique.

Daughter of a Hampshire rector, Jane Austen was educated at home along with her sisters. Her life was uneventful, passed as it was at the various country parishes where her father served and now and then at the health resort of Bath. With a matter-of-fact mind, she aimed at nothing higher than delineating the characters and manners of the middle class society in the countryside that she knew. This she did in six full-fledged novels, four of which *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park* and *Emma* were published between 1811 and 1815, and the remaining two *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* in 1818, after her death. Their dates of writing are somewhat different. *Northanger Abbey*, for example, was the first to be written (1797) but published last. It is interesting to remember that Jane Austen had considerable

difficulty in finding a publisher for her novels, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*. She broke into news and fame after the appearance of an anonymous article in the *Quarterly Review* praising *Emma*. The writer, now known to be Scott, said: "That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!" That, in a nutshell, is the whole secret of Jane Austen's art. She had no impressive sounding theory of the novel and no proclaimed moral to teach. Her only object was to entertain her readers by a truthful presentation of the ordinary social scene, and her brilliant success was undoubtedly due to her unambitious aim. She deliberately restricted the field of her work to a small corner of England of which she had intimate knowledge. Her limitations are obvious, but within her narrow field she has no equal. In her novels we get a perfect picture of the world in little, a microcosm—a model of the larger world or macrocosm.

Knowing that ordinary life is anything but romantic, Jane Austen eschewed the picturesque, the passionate, in fact all the spectacular devices employed by the novelists to capture the interest of the reader. Wars, matters of state, high life—all these were irrelevant to her purpose. Her novels were produced during the Napoleonic Wars, and yet there might never have been a Napoleon or French Revolution for all she cared. Naval officers do appear in her novels, but only as attractions for the girls in search of husbands. Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* and Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* are introduced not as symbols of war or of naval life, but as part of the ordinary social scene. The author's brothers were in the Navy and naval exercises were sometimes held in the neighbourhood. She had nothing but amused contempt for the romantic extravagances of the Radcliffian novel of terror and mystery. She makes fun of the passion for this kind of novel in *Northanger Abbey*. Nor had she any patience with the novel of sentiment practised by such writers as Henry Mackenzie (*Man of Feeling*) and Sterne (*Sentimental Journey*). She ridicules the sentimental gush of Marianne, the heroine of *Sense and Sensibility*. She could dispense with such exhibitionism simply because she had, like Wordsworth, a genius for making the common uncommon, the power to impart the charm of novelty to the ordinary, the trivial. The daily round of domestic work, social visits, gossip, balls and assemblies, love-affairs, marriages, money matters—such was the raw material of her novels. In her hands this unpromising stuff becomes as exciting as any romance by its sheer authenticity.

The plot in a typical Austen novel is built round the affairs of the heart, specially of the feminine heart. The novel has the usual

happy ending with the marriage of the hero and heroine. Round them are placed other characters who illustrate human nature in all its complex variety. While the characters of the hero and heroine are developed at some length, it is the secondary characters that enrich the social comedy. *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, would lose half its savour, if there were no Collins or the Bennets. The characters are individuals and not mere types. Without indulging in the irritatingly minute psychological examination common enough in such writers as Henry James and Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen seizes the essentials of a character in a few broad strokes. Her assessment of character is born of both knowledge and sympathy. There are no absolutes in her moral world. Human nature is of mixed strain. The formal villains, like Wickham (*Pride and Prejudice*), Willoughby (*Sense and Sensibility*), the Crawfords (*Mansfield Park*), Frank Churchill (*Emma*) have their good points—wit, gaiety, charm.

The principal charm of her novels, apart from their story interest, is the fine ironic touch that she gives to her characters. The irony is all pervasive and is discriminatingly distributed between dialogue and narrative. In the interest of ironic characterisation the author does not scruple to spin out the dialogue to inordinate length. A prominent example is the conversation between John Dashwood and his wife in *Sense and Sensibility*. The sustained irony of this dialogue (running to six pages) designed to reveal the utter selfishness of John, blatantly encouraged by Mrs. Dashwood, is one of the most delightful things to be found anywhere in English literature. Starting with the intention to give to his step-mother and step-sisters a subsidy of £3000 to fulfil his pledge to his deceased father, he whittles down the amount, step by step, to zero, and winds up by suggesting that far from needing any help from him the aforesaid relations might in fact be much more able to give *him* something. To accentuate the irony of the picture the author styles John Dashwood as a not ill-disposed young man "unless to be rather cold-hearted, and rather selfish is to be ill-disposed." Swift himself is not more cool and calm and sober in the pungency of his *Modest Proposal*.

She is equally keen on exposing other follies and foibles of society—its snobberies, vanities, hypocrisies. Mark the cool irony in the opening of *Mansfield Park*: "About thirty years ago, Miss Maria Ward of Huntingdon, with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park, in the county of Northampton, and to be thereby raised to the rank of a baronet's lady, with all the comforts and consequences of an handsome house and large income. All Huntingdon exclaimed on the greatness of the match, and her uncle, the lawyer, himself allowed her to be at least three thousand pounds short of any equitable claim to it." Sound financial position is a necessary ingredient of happiness, and the financial standing of the characters occupies an important place in Jane's novels. She accepts the class distinctions of the day, but

this does not imply any snobbery. Those who base their claim to superiority merely on birth or wealth are butts of her ridicule. The caricature of Lady Catherine de Burgh in *Pride and Prejudice* is a familiar example. Another is furnished by Sir Walter Elliot (*Persuasion*) who is thus summed up at the very beginning of the novel: "Sir Walter Elliot of Kellynch-hall in Somersetshire, was a man who, for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage."

Miss Austen is, however, particularly hard on hypocrisy. When Mrs. Musgrove (*Persuasion*) makes a hysterical show of grief over a long deceased son just to elicit social sympathy, the author for once loses her usual poise and comments with uncharacteristic forthrightness:

"The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were, that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome, hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea, because he was stupid and unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for at any time by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard of, and scarcely at all regretted, when the intelligence of his death abroad had worked its way to Uppercross two years before.

"He had, in fact, though his sisters were now doing all they could for him by calling him 'poor Richard,' been nothing better than a thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable Dick Musgrove, who had never done anything to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name, living or dead."

It is a commonplace of criticism that the greatest English novelists—Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Meredith—are, by and large, rather careless in plot construction. Jane Austen is an exception to this rule. She shows perfect mastery in planning as well as in execution. All parts of the novel are dovetailed into one another, and there are no loose ends. Her style has an easy spontaneity and fluency without losing anything in clarity, point, or precision.

Though her novels are not didactic, they have, nevertheless, a common pattern of meaning. The secret of happiness, according to Jane Austen lies in compromise. The eternal conflict between personal feeling and external fact can be resolved only by moderating the feeling. We cannot change the nature of the universe—human nature, social customs, traditions, etc. but we can change ourselves. In other words, personal as well as social harmony can be achieved only by accommodating oneself to inexorable facts. The hero and heroine in Jane Austen's novels learn this lesson the hard way. They are chastened and subdued by their experience of the stern realities of existence and learn not to demand of life more than it can give. An extreme example of this pragmatic approach to life is provided by Charlotte's marriage to the egregious Collins (*Pride and Prejudice*). This sticks in the throats of some sensitive readers, but it is quite in character with the no-nonsense air of Jane Austen's novels.

Realising that there was no other suitor in the offing, the intelligent and prudent—Charlotte prefers Collins rather than permanent spinsterhood. He may not be her ideal of a husband but he would give her social and economic security which is infinitely better than a short-lived romance. There is nothing improbable in this marriage. Austen is a super-realist, and no praise is too high for her sheer authenticity.

Pride and Prejudice. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet with their five daughters live at the village of Longbourn in Hertfordshire. Their property is entailed and in the absence of a male heir is to pass to Mr. Bennet's cousin Collins, who is a rector in the Parish of Hunsford near Westerham, Kent; the post being given him by the haughty and insolent Lady Catherine de Burgh to whom he shows the most obsequious regard. Charles Bingley, a rich bachelor from the north of England takes Netherfield, a house in the neighbourhood where he brings his two sisters and his bachelor friend Fitzwilliam Darcy, nephew of Lady Catherine. The arrival of rich bachelors in the neighbourhood is a source of great delight to the Bennets, specially the Missus, with five unmarried daughters on their hands.

The story centres round the loves of the two elder sisters, Jane and Elizabeth Bennet. Bingley and Jane fall in love with each other, while Darcy though attracted to Elizabeth slights her at a ball. From this point on the story relates the complications that arise between the two parties through pride and prejudice—the pride of Darcy and the prejudice of Elizabeth. The villain of the piece is Wickham, a young militia officer. He is the son of the late steward of the Darcy estate and was to have received a living which was in the gift of Darcy, should he take orders. Having refused to take orders he accepted from Darcy three thousand pounds in order to study law and relinquished his claim to the living. Within a year he had run through the money and asked Darcy to give him the living as he had decided after all to take orders. Darcy quite naturally refused the claim. Nor was this all. He went down to Ramsgate where Darcy's sister, just out of school, was staying and eloped with her. Luckily Darcy found the fugitives and saved his sister.

This dissolute and unprincipled adventurer poisons Elizabeth's ears against Darcy by charging him with unjust treatment. Elizabeth's prejudice is further intensified by the part Darcy had taken, together with Bingley sisters in alienating Bingley from Jane. This step they had taken first, because Jane had no fortune, and secondly, because they were disgusted with the vulgarity of Mrs. Bennet and her younger daughters at a ball given by Bingley at Netherfield.

An important link in the story is the episode of Collins and Elizabeth. Collins, a pompous fool, wishing to make some amends to the family for the injury done by the entail, proposes to Elizabeth and is promptly rejected. Mrs. Bennet, a temperamental and stupid woman, is outraged at Elizabeth's refusal and reports to Mr. Bennet. Calling Elizabeth to his presence, he said "I understand that Mr. Collins had made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?" She replied

that it was. "Very well—and this offer of marriage you have refused?" "I have, Sir." "Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?" "Yes, or I will never see her again."

"An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*!"

Mr. Collins not in the least disconcerted by Elizabeth's rejection transfers his affections to Elizabeth's friend, Charlotte Lucas, who promptly accepts him. Invited by Charlotte to her new home, Elizabeth is again brought into contact with Darcy who is on a visit to his aunt Lady Catherine. His love getting better of his pride, he proposes to Elizabeth who indignantly rejects him giving as her reasons his unjust treatment of Wickham and his being instrumental in separating Bingley from Jane. Darcy in a letter disproves the first charge by exposing the perfidy of Wickham and justifies the second by saying that he felt the match to be unequal from his friend's point of view and also that he believed Jane's feelings for Bingley were not very strong. He admitted he might have been mistaken on this point and regretted the sorrow he had unwittingly caused.

The resolution of the plot is brought about by Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner (Mrs. Bennet's sister). On a visit to the north of England with them Elizabeth visits Pemberley, the Darcy estate, thinking Darcy away. Darcy, however, is present and welcomes the visitors and introduces them to his sister Georgina. At this point news is received that Lydia, the third of the Bennet girls, has eloped with Wickham. Darcy traces the couple, pays Wickham's debts persuades him to marry Lydia and buys him a new commission. Mr. Bennet agrees to receive them and they are married.

Bingley returns to Netherfield accompanied by Darcy and in a matter of days becomes engaged to Jane. Darcy's efforts on behalf of Lydia have deeply impressed Elizabeth who knows in her heart that he has done all this for her. Accordingly when he proposes again he is gladly accepted. Mrs. Bennet is hysterically excited when the engagement is announced.

"Good gracious! Lord bless me! only think! dear me! Mr Darcy! Who would have thought of it! Oh, my sweetest Lizzie! A house in Town! Three daughters married! Ten thousand a year! Oh, Lord! What will become of me? I shall go distracted."

Mr. Bennet's reaction was not less characteristic. "I admire all my three sons-in-law highly," said he. "Wickham, perhaps is my favourite; but I think I shall like your husband quite as well as Jane's."

Scott (1771-1832). We have seen how Scott gave up verse romance when he saw he could not compete with Byron in that field. He was conscious of his varied gifts and saw much greater scope for them in prose romance. The novel had taken great strides during the

eighteenth century and had become by Scott's time a favourite form of literature, so that Byron or no Byron, Scott would have turned to it sooner or later. His first novel, *Waverley*, was published anonymously in 1814, but he had begun it in 1805 and laid it aside. It was an immediate success. The public as well as the critics at once realised that a new star had risen in the literary firmament. The novel which dealt with the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 was a revelation. Besides the romantic interest of the Bonnie Prince Charlie, it contained vivid descriptions of Highland scenery and the Highlanders. The English were thrilled with the novelty and the Scots with the truth. This combination of historical events and descriptions of Scottish scenery, character, speech and manners, Scott kept up throughout the series of Scotch novels that followed. Thus he brought Scotland into the stream of European romanticism and led the way to the great French romancers, Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo.

In writing his Scotch novels, Scott was careful to deal first with the historical periods nearer to his own day before venturing into the romoter past. *Waverley* with its sub-title, '*Tis Sixty years Since*, had treated of the '45, *Guy Mannering* (1815) which followed dealt with the days of his youth, and *The Antiquary* (1816) with the last years of the 18th century. It was only with *Old Mortality* (1816) that he really ventures into the past—the 17th century and the reign of Charles II. The theme of this—one of his finest historical novels—is the violent conflict between the fanatical Puritans, the Covenanters, and the royal forces under the cruel Claverhouse, "Bonnie Dundee." In *Rob Roy* (1817) and the *Heart of Midlothian* (1818) he returned to the 18th century, while in *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) and *The Legend of Montrose* (1819) he went back to the 17th.

After these, by common consent his finest work in prose fiction, Scott turned to fresh fields and pastures new, though he did not abandon Scotland altogether. He explored the historical past of England, Wales, the continent, and the Holy Land. As it is neither necessary nor possible to consider each novel individually it would be best to give a bare list for purposes of reference with indications of countries and historical periods dealt with in each. They are as follows:

Ivanhoe (1819)—England, 12th century, the reign of John and Richard Coeur de Lion.

The Monastery and *The Abbot* (1820)—Scotland under Mary Stuart, 16th Century.

Kenilworth (1821)—England under Elizabeth, 16th century.

The Pirate (1821)—Shetland or Zetland island, 17th century. Scott had visited the island as a member of the Scottish Lighthouse Commission.

The Fortunes of Nigel (1822)—England under James I, 17th century.

Peveril of the Peak (1823)—England under Charles II, 17th century.

Quentin Durward (1823)—France under the crafty Louis XI, 15th century.

St. Ronan's Well (1824)—Scotland, early 19th century; contemporary life in the Scottish spa of St. Ronan's Well.

Redgauntlet (1825)—Scotland, some 20 years after '45.

Talisman (1825)—Crusade in the Holy land under Richard I, 12th century.

The Betrothed (1825)—Wales under Henry II with a tenuous connection with the crusades, 12th century. In 1826 came the collapse of the publishing firm of Ballantyne & Co. and the financial ruin of Scott. He bravely set to work to pay off the huge debt of nearly £150,000 and produced about half a dozen novels which, though written under great mental strain, are not far below his happiest efforts. These are:

(i) *Woodstock* (1827)—England, Civil War, Cromwell, and the escape of Charles II, 17th century.

(ii) *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828)—Scotland under Robert III, close of the 14th century.

(iii) *Anne of Geierstein* (1829)—England under Edward IV, Wars of the Roses, the scene shifting to Switzerland and France.

(iv) *Count Robert of Paris* (1831)—Constantinople and the first Crusade, 11-12 century.

(v) *Castle Dangerous* (1832)—Scotland under Robert the Bruce (Robert I) King and national hero (1274-1329); the main event of the novel—the defence of Douglas Castle by the English against Bruce—took place in 1306.

The last two novels betray decline of power as a result of softening of the brain.

Scott wrote many kinds of novel including the conventional domestic or social novel of manners—but he owes his eminence in English literary history to his position as the creator of historical novel. He had a deep sense of history and his mind was an encyclopedic storehouse of various historical dates, specially those relating to his own country. Tory in sentiment and a lover of the picturesque, he had a natural attachment for the Middle Ages and chivalry. He had made his mark as a story-teller in verse. The verse medium, however, is cramping, and only a fraction of his genius had found expression in his verse narratives. The novel provided a larger canvas for the expression of his varied gifts and endowments: his all-embracing sympathies, his rich humour, his deep understanding of human character, specially of the common people; and he put the best of himself in his novels, specially in those relating to Scotland. He wrote more than two dozen novels and at least half of them are devoted to Scotland.

The historical novel had been attempted before him by the 'Gothic' school of Horace Walpole, Mrs. Radcliffe and 'Monk' Lewis as also by Godwin in *St. Leon*, but these were crude, full of inaccuracies and anachronisms. Scott, while not uninterested in tales of wonder and mystery, chose to present history in the romantic garb of an altogether different kind. The romantic in Scott's novels is that which is picturesque in scenery, dress or character, and heroic in action. The romance, however, attaches only to fictitious characters, leaving the historical personages almost untouched. Charles Edward (the Bonnie Prince Charley) Mary Stuart, Elizabeth, James I, Charles II, Claverhouse, Louis XI, Charles the old (Duke of Burgundy), Cromwell, and others—these are presented as history records them. Scott did not falsify history as some of his successors have done. He just placed the great figures of history in a picturesque setting. Scott's novels, broadly speaking, are history made picturesque.

While the romantic elements, including of course a central love interest, constitute the principal appeal of Scott's novels to the general reader, their real merit lies in something different. To the discerning reader they have a deeper significance of character, motive and meaning than mere entertainment. Scott would not be the great novelist he is but for the magnificent gallery of characters. These characters are not merely local; they have in them an element of universality. They are classic like those of Shakespeare and Dickens. Baron Bradwardine (*Waverley*), Dandie Dinmont, Counsellor Pleydell, Meg Merrilies (*Guy Mannering*), Jonathan Old Buck, Edie Ochiltree (*The Antiquary*), Rob Roy, Bailie Nicol Jarvie, Diana Vernon (*Rob Roy*), Cuddie Headrigg and his mother (*Old Mortality*), Jeanie Deans (*The Heart of Midlothian*), Dugald Dalgetty (*The Legend of Montrose*)—it is these that make the greatness of Scott's novels. And these characters live by their speech. In novels like *Ivanhoe* and *Quentin Durward* where the scene is laid in the Middle Ages, Scott's dialogue is apt to be conventional—archaic, stylised or stilted; for he was trying to reproduce the speech of these far-off times. It is only in the Scotch novels that Scott's gift of dramatic dialogue is shown to best advantage. All shades and gradations of character are revealed through dialogue: the humorous and realistic wisdom of Dandie Dinmont, Pleydell, the Bailie; the vehemence of Meg Merrilies, the gipsy; the pedantry of Old Buck, the antiquary; the shrewdness of Ochiltree, the Wandering tramp; the eloquent pathos of Jeanie Dean's pleading with Queen Caroline on behalf of her sister; the humorous, almost farcical, realism of Cuddie Headrigg trying, in the interest of safety, to stop his fanatical mother's tongue-lashing. Scott's rich humour is best displayed in the speech of the humbler people. His sense of the comic is also shown in his descriptions of eccentric characters. Though he is eminently fair and just in presenting the case of both sides—the Covenanters and the Royalists—in *Old Mortality*, he can not help laughing at the extremists among the covenanters and gives them ridiculous (and revealing) names; Macbriar, Mucklewrath, Poundtext, etc. Their

amusing speeches, too, larded with Biblical texts and allusions, are quite in character.

Apart from history and character, the Scotch novels have the added interest of Scott's political philosophy. As a Scotsman he regretted the loss of Scottish independence and the gradual disappearance of the old feudal order with its traditions of sturdy independence, clan loyalties, factions, and heroism; and yet he realized that the future of Scotland lay with England, civilisation, and prosperity. The 1707 Act of Union, the failure of the Jacobite rebellion of the '45 and the Act of 1748, abolishing feudalism—these were stern and irrevocable facts of history. Jacobitism was doomed for ever. It might be cherished as a sentiment and glorified in song, but it was no longer practical politics. The Hanoverian dynasty had come to stay. Scott while respecting the extremists like Rob Roy who would cling to the old order, nevertheless throws his weight on the side of the moderate and the prudent like Bailie Nicol Jarvie who realise the futility of living in the past and plump for peace and prosperity in the present.

At first sight the pattern of meaning that emerges from the Scotch novels might appear to have only personal or local significance for Scotsmen. But the lesson has a wider, even universal, application. The conflict between tradition and modernity between the old and the new, is one that confronts and baffles all countries, and specially those which are backward, undeveloped, or developing. The solution which Scott suggests, viz. a compromise between the old and the new, the preservation, that is to say, of all that is noble and generous in the past in the different context of the present day world, would seem to be the best. We have to live in the present with a forward look without abandoning that which is unspoilt in human relationships in the past.

Scott's merit is not merely that he wrote exciting romances, or made history picturesque, or created classic characters, but that he also enshrined in his novels universal values: truth, honour, courage, courtesy, decency. Himself a man of transparent integrity and generosity, Scott embodied in his novels the high ideals of chivalry which are their greatest recommendation to young and old alike. We feel we are better men for having read him. His novels are on an epic scale; they expand our mental horizon, enlarge our experience, and broaden our sympathies.

Two criticisms that are often levelled against Scott are, first, that his style is careless or slipshod, and second, that his love scenes are feeble. As to the first, it must be admitted that Scott wrote too fast, sometimes knocking off a novel in a few weeks. He had no time for revision. After the financial disaster that overtook him, he worked with feverish speed and literally wrote himself to death. Considering his astonishing industry, fertility of invention, and the literary richness of his novels generally and of Scotch novels specially, it is hypercritical to emphasize a few blemishes of style which are inci-

dental to hurried compositions, and which are noticed only by those who are out to look for them. Scott wrote for the general reader, not for grammarians or professional critics.

The second criticism has even lesser force. The ground of this criticism is that Scott's heroes and heroines do not conform to the pattern of passionate lovers of the past. In the first place, it is by no means certain that *all* lovers in olden times were violently passionate; secondly, a writer of historical fiction has the right to edit the past on moral as well as artistic grounds. Scott, though not a Puritan, had his own standards of dignity and decency—standards, incidentally, in no way different from those that were to prevail after him in the Victorian era. His love scenes are all that should satisfy a well-bred person. Those who want something more spicy had better read Byron or Vicky Baum.

A brief summary of *Ivanhoe*, a popular favourite and illustrative extracts from other novels follow.

Ivanhoe. The background of the story is the enmity of Saxon and Norman that is supposed by Scott to have persisted to the times of Richard, Coeur de Lion, King of England (Richard I, 1189-99). Cedric, a Saxon noble, wants to restore the Saxon line to the throne of England. He hopes to achieve this by marrying his ward, the lady Rowena, a descendant of Alfred, to Athelstane, also of royal Saxon blood. Cedric's son Wilfred of Ivanhoe loves Rowena who returns his love. Angered at this attempt to thwart his plan, Cedric banishes Ivanhoe who joins Richard in the Crusade in the Holy Land and wins his favour. Richard on his return from the Crusade is taken prisoner in Austria. Taking advantage of Richard's absence his younger brother John plots with Norman nobles to usurp the throne.

There are two principal events in the story: the tournament at Ashby and the siege of the castle of Torquilstone. In the tournament all the Knights of John's party, including the Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert and Sir Reginald Front de Boeuf, are defeated by Ivanhoe supported by Richard who unknown has returned to England. On their way home after the tournament the Saxon party is ambushed by the Norman nobles and Cedric, Ivanhoe, Athelstane, Rowena, the Jew Isaac and his beautiful daughter Rebecca, are captured and kept prisoner in Front de Boeuf's castle of Torquilstone. Ivanhoe, who was wounded in the tournament is nursed in the castle by Rebecca.

Their enemies in their power, the Normans begin their nefarious game. Front de Boeuf demands from the Jew a ransom of a thousand silver pounds under threat of torture. He agrees to pay on the condition that his daughter is restored to him in safety. This being unacceptable, Boeuf orders torture, but before it could be applied, an alarm is sounded on a bugle outside the castle, at which he hurries away.

While the Jew was undergoing this ordeal in a dungeon, Rowena

and Rebecca were receiving more sinister attentions in other parts of the castle. De Bracy was harassing Rowena with his unwelcome addresses and the Templar forgetting his holy vows was attempting to ravish Rebecca. Luckily for them as for the Jew, the miscreants were called away by the alarm without executing their purpose.

Meanwhile Cedric has escaped from the castle dressed as a monk and mustered a band of rescuers. The castle is stormed by Saxons and Robinhood's outlaws led by Robinhood and Richard. All the prisoners are rescued except Rebecca who is carried away by the Templar. She is saved from his lust by the sudden arrival of the Head of the Order of Knights Templar only to be charged with witchcraft and sentenced to death for having seduced a holy Knight from the path of saintliness! She saves herself from immediate death by insisting on trial by single combat. She sends a letter to Ivanhoe requesting him to champion her cause. Ivanhoe arrives to fight the accusing Templar Bois-Guilbert, who falls dead, without being touched by his opponent's lance, the victim of his own contending passions. Soon after arrives Richard accompanied by his followers to unfurl the royal banner and proclaim himself undisputed King of England.

By the intercession of Richard, Rowena and Ivanhoe are united, the union being facilitated by Athelstane's relinquishing his claim to the lady. The story ends happily for all except poor Rebecca. She bids farewell to Rowena, suppressing her own love for Ivanhoe, who too is uneasy on her account remembering what she had done for him in the Norman castle.

Jenie Deans's Interview with the Queen

The events relate to the Porteous riot of 1736. Capt. John Porteous, Commander of the City Guard of Edinburgh, unjustifiably ordered his force to fire on a crowd that had collected to witness the hanging of a robber. Several persons were killed and Porteous was sentenced to death, but later pardoned. This enraged the people who broke into Tolbooth, the prison, called 'the Heart of Midlothian', brought Porteous out and hanged him. Effie Deans an unmarried mother has been convicted of child-murder and is to be hanged. Jeanie Deans, her half-sister, sets out on foot for London and through the influence of the Duke of Argyle is granted an interview by Queen Caroline. She successfully pleads with the queen for her sister's life.

'If it like you, madam, said Jeanie, I would hae gaen to the end of the earth to save the life of John Porteous, or any other unhappy man in his condition; but I might lawfully doubt how far I am called upon to be the avenger of his blood, though it may become the civil magistrate to do so. He is dead and gaen to his place, and they that have slain him must answer for their ain act. But my sister, my puir sister, Effie, still lives, though her days and hours are numbered! She still lives, and a word of the king's mouth might restore her to a broken-hearted auld man, that never in his daily and nightly exercise forgot to pray that his majesty might be blessed with a long and prosperous reign, and that his throne, and the throne of his posterity, might be established in righteousness. O madam, if ever ye kend what it was to sorrow for and with a sinning and a suffering creature, whose mind is sae tossed that she can be neither ca'd fit to live or die, have some compassion on our misery!—Save an honest house from dishonour, and an unhappy girl, not eighteen years of age, from an early and dreadful death! Alas!

it is not when we sleep soft and wake merrily ourselves that we think on other people's sufferings. Our hearts are waxed light within us then, and we are for righting our ain wrongs and fighting our ain battles. But when the hour of trouble comes to the mind or to the body—and seldom may it visit your leddyship—and when the hour of death comes, that comes to high and low—lang and late may it be yours! Oh, my leddy, then it isna what we hae dune for ourselves, but what we he dune for others, that we think on maist pleasantly. And the thoughts that ye hae intervened to spare the puir thing's life will be sweeter in that hour, come when it may, than if a word of your mouth could hang the hail Porteous mob at the tail of ae tow.'

Tear followed tear down Jeanie's cheeks, as, her features glowing and quivering with emotion, she pleaded her sister's cause with a pathos which was at once simple and solemn.

'This is eloquence,' said her majesty to the Duke of Argyle.—'Young woman,' she continued, addressing herself to Jeanie, 'I cannot grant a pardon to your sister—but you shall no want my warm intercession with his majesty. Take this house-wife-case,' she continued putting a small embroidered needle-case into Jeanie's hands; 'do not open it now, but at your leisure—you will find something in it which will remind you that you have had an interview with Queen Caroline.'

Jeanie, having her suspicions thus confirmed, dropped on her knees, and would have expanded herself in gratitude; but the duke, who was upon thorns lest she should say more or less than just enough, touched his chin once more.

'Our business is, I think, ended for the present, my lord duke,' said the queen, 'and I trust, to your satisfaction. Hereafter I hope to see your grace more frequently both at Richmond and St James's.—Come, Lady Suffolk, we must wish his grace good-morning.'

They exchanged their parting reverences, and the duke, so soon as the ladies had turned their backs, assisted Jeanie to rise from the ground, and conducted her back through the avenue, which she trod with the feeling of one who walks in her sleep.

(From *The Heart of Midlothian*)

The Trial of Evan Dhu

FERGUS MAC IVOR of Glennaquoich, otherwise called Vich Ian Vohr, and Evan Mac-Ivor, in the Dhu Tarrascleugh, otherwise called Evan Dhu, otherwise called Evan Maccombich, or Evan Dhu Maccombich—you, and each of you, stand attainted of high treason. What have you to say for yourselves, why the Court should not pronounce judgement against you, that you die according to law?

Fergus, as the presiding Judge was putting on the fatal cap of judgement, placed his own bonnet upon his head, regarded him with a steadfast and stern look, and replied in a firm voice, 'I cannot let this numerous audience suppose that to such an appeal I have no answer to make. But what I have to say, you would not bear to hear, for my defence would be your condemnation. Proceed, then, in the name of God, to do what is permitted to you. Yesterday, and the day before, you have condemned loyal and honourable blood to be poured forth like water. Spare not mine. Were that of all my ancestors in my veins, I would have perilled it in this quarrel.' He resumed his seat, and refused again to rise.

Evan Maccombich looked at him with great earnestness, and, rising up, seemed anxious to speak; but the confusion of the court, and the perplexity arising from thinking in a language different from that in which he was to express himself kept him silent. There was a murmur of compassion among the spectators, from an idea that the poor fellow intended to plead the influence of his superior as an excuse for his crime. The Judge commanded silence, and encouraged Evan to proceed.

'I was only ganging to say may lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be in an insinuating manner, 'that if you excellent honour, and the honourable Court would

let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France, and no to trouble King George's government again, that ony six o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll just let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye myself, to head or hang, and you may begin wi' me the very first man'.

Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, a sort of laugh was heard in the court at the extraordinary nature of the proposal. The Judge checked this indecency, and Evan, looking sternly around, when the murmur abated, 'If the Saxon gentlemen are laughing', he said, 'because a poor man, such as me, thinks my life, or the life of six of my degree, is worth very right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word, and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman, nor the honour of a gentleman'. There was no further inclination to laugh among the audience, and a dead silence ensued.

(*Waverley*)

The Laird Evicts the Gipsies

Certain qualms of feeling had deterred Ellangowan from attending in person to see his tenants expelled. He left the executive part of the business to the officers of the law. . . .

Mr. Bertram himself chose that day to make a visit to a friend at some distance. But it so happened, notwithstanding his precautions, that he could not avoid meeting his late tenants during their retreat from his property.

It was in a hollow way, near the top of a steep ascent, upon the verge of the Ellangowan estate, that Mr. Bertram met the gipsy procession. Four or five men formed the advanced guard, wrapped in long loose great-coats that hid their tall slender figure, as the large slouched hats, drawn over their brows, concealed their wild features, dark eyes, and swarthy faces. Two of them carried long fowling-pieces, one wore a broadsword without a sheath, and all had the Highland dirk, though they did not wear that weapon openly or ostentatiously. Behind them followed the train of laden asses, and small carts, or *trumblers* as they were called in that country, on which were laid the decrepit and the helpless, the aged and infant part of the exiled community. The women in their red cloaks and straw hats, the elder children with bare heads and bare feet, and almost naked bodies, had the immediate care of the little caravan. The road was narrow, running between two broken banks of sand. . . .

When the Laird had pressed on with difficulty among a crowd of familiar faces, which had on all former occasions marked his approach with the reverence due to that of a superior being, but in which he now only read hatred and contempt, and had got clear of the throng, he could not help turning his horse, and looking back to mark the progress of their march. . . .

The van had already reached a small stunted thicket, which was at the bottom of the hill, and which gradually hid the line of march until the last stragglers disappeared.

His sensations were bitter enough. The race, it is true, which he had thus summarily dismissed from their ancient place of refuge, was idle and vicious; but had he endeavoured to render them otherwise? They were not more irregular characters now, than they had been while they were admitted to consider themselves as a sort of subordinate dependants of his family; and ought the mere circumstance of his becoming a magistrate to have made at once such a change in his conduct towards them? Some means of reformation ought at least to have been tried, before sending seven families at once upon the wide world, and depriving them of a degree of countenance which withheld them at least from atrocious guilt. There was also a natural yearning of heart on parting with so many known and familiar faces; and to this feeling Godfrey Bertram was peculiarly accessible, from the limited qualities of his mind, which sought its principal amusements among the petty objects around him. As he was about to turn his horse's head to pursue his journey, Meg Merrilies, who had lagged behind the troop, unexpectedly presented herself.

She was standing upon one of those high precipitous banks which, as we before noticed, overhung the road; so that she was placed considerably higher than Ellangowan, even though he was on horseback; and her tall figure, relieved against the clear blue sky, seemed almost of supernatural stature. We have noticed that there was in her general attire, or rather in her mode of adjusting it, somewhat of a foreign costume, artfully adopted perhaps for the purpose of adding to the effect of her spells and predictions, or perhaps from some traditional notions respecting the dress of her ancestors. On this occasion she had a large piece of red cotton cloth rolled about her head in the form of a turban, from beneath which her dark eyes flashed with uncommon lustre. Her long and tangled black hair fell in elf-locks from the folds of this singular head-gear. Her attitude was that of a sibyl in frenzy, and she stretched out in her right hand a sapling bough, which seemed just pulled.

'I'll be d-d,' said the groom, 'if she has not been cutting the young ashes in the Dukit park!'—the figure which was thus perched above his path.

'Ride your ways,' said the gipsy, 'ride your ways, Laird of Ellangowan—ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram!—This day have ye quenched seven smoking hearths—see if the fire in your ain parlour burn the blitter for that. Ye have riven the thack off seven cottar houses—look if your aim roof-tree stand the faster—Ye may stable your stirks in the shealings at Derncleugh—see that the hare does not couch on the hearthstane at Ellangowan.—Ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram—what do ye glower after our folk for?—There's thirty hearts there, that wad hae wanted bread ere ye had wanted sunkets, and spent their life-blood ere ye had scratched your finger. Yes—ther's thirty yonder, from the auld wife of an hundred to the babe that was born last week, that ye have turned out o' their bits o' bields, to sleep with the tod and the blackcock in the muirs! Ride your ways, Ellangowan.—Our bairns are hinging at our weary backs—look that your braw cradle at hame be the fairer spread up: not that I'm wishing ill to little Harry, or to the babe that's yet to be born—God forbid—and make them kind to the poor, and better folk than their father!—And now, ride e'en your ways; for these are the last words ye'll ever hear Meg Merrilies speak, and this is the last reise that I'll ever cut in the bonny woods of Ellagowan.'

So saying, she broke the sapling she held in her hand, and flung it into the road. Margaret of Anjou, bestowing on her triumphant foes her keen-edged malediction, could not have turned from them with a gesture more proudly contemptuous. The Laird was clearing his voice to speak, and thrusting his hand in his pocket to find a half-crown; the gipsy waited neither for his reply nor his donation, but strode down the hill to overtake the caravan.

Ellangowan rode pensively home; and it was remarkable that he did not mention this interview to any of his family. The groom was not so reserved; he told the story at great length to a full audience in the kitchen, and concluded by swearing, that 'if ever the devil spoke by the mouth of a woman, he had spoken by that of Meg Merrilies that blessed day.'

(Guy Mannering)

Other Novelists of the Romantic Era

Before Jane Austen the novel of ordinary life had been essayed by Fanny Burney and Maria Edgeworth towards the close of the 18th century. Miss Burney's work has already been reviewed. Miss Edgeworth (1767-1849) wrote educational stories for children as well as conventional novels of fashionable life, but is remembered chiefly for her remarkably truthful studies of Irish life and character in *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *The Absentee* (1810), and *Ormond* (1817). Scott generously confessed his indebtedness to Edgeworth for the idea of doing for his country what she had done for Ireland. Not that he had no other example of 'national' appeal before him. Miss Jane Porter (1776-1850) had acquired fame by publishing two

historical novels, *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803) and *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810). The second, dealing with thirteenth century Scotland, is in every sense a 'Scotch' novel and was translated into German and Russian. Besides these, there were two other writers of historical fiction whose works appeared contemporaneously with Scott's: Miss Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), *Destiny* (1831); and John Galt's *The Ayrshire Legatees* (1821), *Annals of the Parish* (1821), *The Entails* (1823). Both Miss Ferrier and Galt have a real Scotch flavour.

Jane Austen had no followers for a long time, and though Scott had immediate followers they were not very competent. But the growing importance of the novel is testified by the fact that a large number of novels of many different kinds were produced during the romantic era. Of their authors only a few merit individual notice. They are: Thomas Love Peacock, Captain Frederick Marryat, Charles Lever, Charles Maturin, Mrs. Shelley, James Morier, Miss Mary Russel Mitford, G.P.R. James, and William Harrison Anisworth.

Peacock (1785-1866). An intimate friend of Shelley and father-in-law of George Meredith, Peacock was a man of letters, though he had no regular education. His literary excellence is best shown in the satiric wit of his 'eccentric' novels: *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Melincourt* (1817), *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), *Maid Marian* (1822), *Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829), *Crotchet Castle* (1831), and *Gryll Grange* (1860). There is very little plot in these novels. A number of odd characters assemble at a country house and the interest of the novel consists in the amusing talk that follows. Peacock was a survival from the 18th century and mocked at all fads, fashions, and follies current in his day in politics, society, or literature. Though a friend of Shelley, he had no sympathy with the romantics and disliked the Lake poets intensely. He was a classical scholar and his prose had classical polish which is saved from pendency by his wit and humour. And yet, paradoxically enough, his novels are predominantly romantic. He was an odd combination of cynicism and sincerity, and his ridicule of certain fads and follies is as valid today as it was in his time. It's a pity not many read him now a days. *Head long Hall* and *Crotchet Castle* have perennial interest.

Marryat (1792-1848). Frederick Marryat, a captain in the Royal Navy, wrote a number of novels of sea-life of which the best-known are, *Peter Simple*, *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, and *Masterman Ready*. Full of adventure they have been always popular among boys.

Lever (1806-72). Charles Lever, an Irish doctor, was Consul at Trieste. A reputed eccentric, he is best remembered by the funny and boisterous novels of military life and Irish society, such as *Harry Lorrequer* and *Charles O' Malley*.

Maturin (1782-1824). Charles Maturin, an Irish clergyman,

continued the Radcliffian novel in his *Fatal Revenge* (1807) and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). The latter, his masterpiece, is a story of unrelieved horror and unexplained mystery.

Mrs. Shelley, the poet's wife, has a place in the history of the English novel, by virtue of a single story of supernatural terror: *Frankenstein* (1818). The Shelleys and Byron while living together in Switzerland amused themselves by writing ghost stories, and *Frankenstein* was Mary's contribution. Frankenstein, a Swiss scientist, puts together human bones collected from burial places, and constructs a creature of human semblance into which he instils life. The ugly monster endowed with supernatural strength pursues its creator and kills him. The moral is obvious. We may be destroyed by our own scientific inventions, e.g. the atom bomb, poison gas, etc.

Morier (1780-1849). James Morier, an attache in the British embassy in Persia, attained fame as the writer of *Haji Baba of Ispahan* (1824), a picturesque novel relating the adventures of a Persian rogue. The book aroused great interest by its vivid pictures of Persian life and manners. Persia at that time was part of the fabled Orient and little known.

Mitford (1787-1855). Miss Mitford is remembered chiefly for her delightful sketches of village life in *Our Village* (1819-32). The village described is Three Mile Cross near Reading. The collection has the interest of novelty if not exactly that of a novel.

G.P.R. James (1799-1860) and William Harrison Anisworth (1805-1882) were both historical novelists. The historical novels (*Richelieu*, etc.) and biographical works (*The Black Prince*, etc.) of James are all but forgotten today. Anisworth wrote a large number of historical novels of which the best known are *The Tower of London* (1840) and *Old St. Paul's* (1841).

CHAPTER 36

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH: ESSAY AND CRITICISM

Criticism to the end of the 18th century—Reviews and Magazines and the part played by them in the development of criticism—The *Edinburgh Review*: Jeffrey, Sidney Smith, The *Quarterly Review*: Gifford, Lockhart, Scott, Croker's attack on Keats—*Blackwood's Magazine*: 'Christopher North', Lockhart's attack on the 'Cockney School'—The *London Magazine*: The sole organ of the romantics—The battle between the classicists and the romantics fought in these periodicals ended in the victory of the romantics—Romantic criticism—Coleridge as a critic—The Romantics as critics and essayists: Lamb—Hazlitt—Leigh Hunt—De Quincey—Landor's *Imaginary Conversations*—Cobbet's Journalism.

Next to the Novel, the most important developments in the romantic period were in criticism and the Essay. Neither of these was new. Criticism had been practised before by Dryden, Addison, Johnson, and Goldsmith; and the personal essay or essay proper, derived from Montaigne, had attracted Cowley, Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith. In the 18th century, poets and lovers of poetry participated in critical discussions in reviews and magazines such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* (started 1731), the *Monthly Review* (started 1749) and the *Critical Review* (started 1756). Goldsmith wrote critical papers for the *Monthly* and Smollett was for some time editor of the *Critical Review*. Still later, newspapers like the *Times* (started 1785), the *Morning Chronicle* (started 1769) and the *Morning Post* (started 1772) also gave generous space to critical discussion. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey wrote in the *Morning Post*; Lamb, Moore, and Campbell in the *Chronicle*; Hunt and Disraeli in the *Times*. Criticism up to the end of the 18th century, however, lacked organisation, and was more or less tentative in character. The personal essay, too, had had no worthy practitioners after Goldsmith. It was only during the first quarter of the 19th century that both criticism and the Essay were taken up seriously and became systematic pursuits. The impulses of romanticism—high imagination, individuality, and intense sensibility to beauty—could not but react powerfully on these forms of prose literature. The new criticism and the new essay were the climax of

a haphazard career of two centuries of grouping and fitful experimentation.

The developments in criticism and the Essay are linked up with the history of four periodicals that were founded during the first quarter of the 19th century. These were the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and the *London Magazine*.¹ These periodicals were served by some of the ablest minds of the day and produced a great amount of serious criticism. Unfortunately, however, the political hostility between Whig and Tory overflowed into criticism and vitiated it. Criticism was further bedevilled by another factor, namely, that critics who were liberal in politics were conservative in literature and vice versa. Personal jealousy also accounted for unfair criticism. To top all, critics were protected by anonymity and could indulge their malice with impunity. Of the four periodicals mentioned above, the record of the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* is the blackest. The *Edinburgh*, despite Jeffrey's grand moghal attitude to Wordsworth, was on the whole comparatively sane. Sane or insane however, all the three, though differing in politics, were united in their opposition to the romantics. The *London*, which was set up last of all, was the sole representative of the romantics. Though shortlived, it had an honourable and a most distinguished career.

The *Edinburgh Review* was founded in 1802 by Francis Jeffrey, Henry Brougham, and Sydney Smith, as the organ of the Whigs. The first two were Scottish lawyers and the third an English clergyman. Jeffrey later became a judge and Brougham rose to be Lord Chancellor. Jeffrey was the presiding genius of the *Review*, which made itself notable by its condemnation of the Lake poets. They were attacked because they had given up their earlier liberal principles and had gone over to the conservative camp. Jeffrey was a traditionalist and hated all innovation. His admonition, "This will never do," with which he begins his critique on Wordsworth's *Excursion* savours of the schoolmaster. He is nasty in his jibes at "dancing daffodils" and "sententious leech-gatherers." Much later, he softened towards his victim and made honourable amends in his postscripts for his original severity. Brougham deserves no notice here.

Sidney Smith (1771-1845) is the most important of the trio. He has secured a permanent place in English literature by sheer joking. One of the greatest English wits, he poured his ridicule upon the Tories and used his gift of jesting in the cause of political and religious reform. His plea for Catholic emancipation in his *Letters of Peter Plymley* is still worth reading. He was a reformer rather

¹The broad distinction between Review and Magazine was that the Review confined itself strictly to review or criticism and admitted no original contribution; the Magazine, on the other hand, was a miscellany which included original writing as well as criticism. This distinction, though sometimes blurred, has persisted to our own day.

than a critic, and his wit is of the kind that requires time and space to develop. It is not of the pistol-shot variety, and is rarely personal. Here is an example of his brief, explosive and personal witticism. Reviewing a novel by one Thomas Hope, he writes: "Mr. Hope should avoid humour, in which he certainly does not excel. His attempts of that nature are among the most serious parts of the book."

Among notable contributors to the *Edinburgh* were Scott, Hazlitt, Macaulay, Carlyle, Arnold, and Gladstone. Macaulay's famous essay on Milton appeared in 1825 and made his name. Scott wrote several articles, but soon got disgusted with its methods (Jeffrey had not spared Scott) and severed his connection with it.

The Quarterly Review (London) was started in 1809 by John Murray, the publisher, as a Tory rival to the *Edinburgh*. Its first editor was William Gifford who had made short work of the Della Cruscan School and its sham romanticism in his satires *The Baviad* and *The Macviad* (1794, 95). Like Jeffrey, he belonged to the orthodox school of Pope; this and his hatred of the radicals prejudiced his judgments of the romantic authors. In 1826, Gifford was succeeded by Lockhart. Scott's generous appreciation of *Emma* and Croker's venomous criticism of Keats's *Endymion* were the highlights of this journal. John Wilson Croker was a prominent Tory M.P. and secretary to the Admiralty. Macaulay detested him and severely criticised his edition of *Boswell's Johnson*. He is doomed to perpetual roasting in the Critics' inferno. Among the prominent contributors, besides Scott, were Southey, Lord Salisbury and Gladstone.

Blackwood's Magazine (Edinburgh) was founded in 1817 by the publisher William Blackwood as a rival to the *Edinburgh*. It was a monthly and lighter than the *Edinburgh*. Its staff consisted of three talented writers: John Wilson, John Gibson Lockhart, and James Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd'. It got off to a good start with its 'Chaldee MS', which satirised the Edinburgh celebrities in a parodied Biblical style. Its great popularity, however, was due to the 'Noctes Ambrosiane' (Ambrosian Nights), a series of papers recording supposed festive conversations between the three writers and some others held in Ambrose's tavern. These lasted for thirteen years (1822-35), the largest number being from the pen of Wilson who wrote as 'Christopher North'. Lockhart left Edinburgh to become the editor of the *Quarterly* in London, and Wilson remained the presiding genius of the journal till the end. He became Professor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh on the strength of his Tory politics. He had nothing of the philosophic about him, being more interested in athletics, sports, cock-fighting, yachting, etc. He professed himself a Wordsworthian but did not spare him in his 'Noctes' where he calls him 'an idiot'. He wrote ornate prose and was noted for his ebullient humour. As a critic he was savage and reckless. His humour is often mere buffoonery. Few would care to read him now. Lockhart, too, admired Wordsworth and Coleridge, but was very severe on Keats and Shelley. He is now remembered

chiefly for his life of Scott. The 'Ettrick Shepherd', be it remembered, was a shepherd by profession, though he combined it with the writing of poetry and literature generally. He too was romantic in his sympathies, but is unimportant as a critic. In spite of the romantic leanings of its editorial staff, the record of *Blackwood's* is no better than that of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*. It distinguished itself, specially in its earlier career, by its scandalous abuse of what it called the 'Cockney School' i.e. Lamb, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt. Keats too was not spared, because of his association with the radical Hunt. The nick-name 'Cockney School' was probably invented by Lockhart. Among other notable contributors was De Quincey.

The *London Magazine* was started in 1820 in opposition to *Blackwood's*, with Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, and Miss Mitford, on its staff. The sole organ of the romantics, it had Keats among its contributors. The hostility between it and *Blackwood's* led to a duel in which its first editor, John Scott, was killed. The principal on the other side was Lockhart, but it was his second who killed him. The *London* had a brief but brilliant career and came to an end in 1829. Among other things that appeared in it were De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* and Lamb's *Essays of Elia*.

Though much of the criticism produced by the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* was polemical and destructive, the periodicals were not entirely useless. They stimulated public opinion and fostered a taste for literature. The two magazines introduced and encouraged new talent. In the *London*, particularly, the romantics found a congenial home and welcome publicity. Before its appearance the only outlets they had were the newspapers or later Hunt's weekly periodicals the *Examiner*, the *Reflector*, etc. Another good that followed from these periodicals was that they fixed the form of the critical essay which has not substantially changed in our modern 'article'.

The battle fought in the Reviews and Magazines of the first quarter of the 19th century, between the reactionaries and the romantics, ended at long last in the victory of the latter. The romantics asserted the independence of the author, and repudiated the external and absolute standards by which he was to be judged—be they of Aristotle, Boileau or Pope. In fact, they maintained that the function of criticism was not to judge but to interpret—to interpret sympathetically. In order to do this the critic must enter into the mind of the author, discover his aim, the means and methods employed by him to achieve that aim, and finally to see to what extent he has succeeded. The process postulates reverence and sympathy. Further, the critic must use his imagination in order to understand the mind of the author. The romantics believed with Wordsworth that imagination is the only faculty which can enable us to see into the life and heart of things. True criticism is imaginative criticism; and since imagination creates, such criticism is creative, like poetry itself. On this view a book of criticism is not merely a book upon a book, a mere parasite; but a book of creative or

original literature—one that exists in its own right.

Apart from imagination, a good critic must have catholic sympathies. This is particularly essential for interpreting the literature of other ages than one's own. The critic must be able to enter into the spirit of the age, since every work of art is conditioned by the situation from which it springs. This is what is called the historical method; it is simply an extension of the imaginative method to authors of remote ages.

Romantic criticism, it will thus be seen, regards a work of art as the expression of its author's temperament. His individuality, his personality, is all important, and it is reflected in his work. To reveal, to interpret, to appreciate this personality is the true function of a critic. This respect for the individual is the hallmark of romantic criticism and is the very reverse of the orthodox canon.

Romantic criticism was stronger on the practical side than on the theoretical. In other words, the romantic critics were concerned with appreciation of literary beauty rather than the principles underlying that appreciation. Coleridge, and to some extent Hazlitt, were strong on both sides. Others like Lamb, De Quincey, Leigh Hunt, were practical critics little concerned with principles of critics.

Coleridge, the single figure who sums up the whole romantic movement, was also the initiator of its criticism. The dictum that the function of criticism is reverential appreciation of the author's mind was the direct outcome of German idealism first introduced to English thought by Coleridge. The starting point of Coleridge's critical theory was the discovery first made by Lessing, the German critic and dramatist, that Shakespearean drama was not 'irregular', or 'artless' (as the 18th century English Shakespeareans believed), but was everywhere controlled by judgment. The so-called extravagances and caprices of Shakespeare were grounded in reasons which it was the function of criticism to discover. This view as modified or elaborated by Schiller and Schelling was accepted by Coleridge and became the basis of his *Lectures on Shakespeare*.

In these lectures, Coleridge endeavours to show that Shakespeare's judgment was at least equal to his genius. Genius is not arbitrary or lawless; it has an instinctive sense of harmony which reconciles inspiration and law. The supreme faculty of genius, the imagination, fuses heterogeneous elements or opposite qualities into an organic unity. It constructs an artistic whole, and not a mechanical combination of 'purple patches'. Shakespeare unites the opposites and illustrates "the great law of Nature that the opposites attract and temper each other." Accordingly he combines tragedy and comedy, which were kept severely apart by the classical dramatists. His defiance of the rules of classical drama did not, however, mean that he was above all rules. He had his own rules. "Genius cannot be lawless: for it is even this that constitutes it genius—the power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination." Shakespeare was a great poet and "The spirit of poetry, like all other living

"powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself with beauty." For example, "Passion in Shakespeare generally displays libertinism, but involves morality" (its opposite). Polonius is not an utter fool, as he is so often represented but a figure "of wisdom no longer actually possessed." In this way, Coleridge finds that "in Shakespeare all the characters are strong." There are no absolute fools or villains. "Hence real folly and dulness are made by him the vehicles of wisdom". And he cites Dogberry as an example.

The logic traced above naturally led Coleridge to conclude that "Assuredly, that criticism of Shakespeare will alone be genial which is reverential."

Coleridge's critical method, borrowed certainly from the Germans, was new and valuable, but was not without its dangers. For, on this theory we have to praise everything in Shakespeare. This method makes his appreciation of character over-subtle. Every quality in a character must be supposed to contain its opposite which it conceals. According to Coleridge, Falstaff was not a coward, and Iago and Richard III were men of mighty intellect. Even in Shakespeare's puns which are often so silly and childish, Coleridge sees profound wisdom. His great influence led in the Victorian era to the sentimental cult of Shakespeare worship which has continued to our own day.

Coleridge's other work of criticism, the *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is a hotchpotch—some very fine things alongside of a lot of irrelevant matter thrown in just to stretch it out to the respectable size of a book. In a book of three hundred and odd pages, a little less than a hundred are devoted to criticism of Wordsworth. It is these pages that make *Biographia Literaria* a priceless possession.

The criticism of Wordsworth consists of four parts: (a) refutation of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction as also of his heresy about metre, (b) his defects, (c) his excellences, and (d) Coleridge's defence of Wordsworth.

(a) In the preface to his collected poems published in 1815 Wordsworth propounded his famous theory that there is no difference between the language of poetry and the language of rustic or low life. By citing examples from his poems, Coleridge shows that if Wordsworth had strictly adhered to this theory, at least two-thirds of the marked beauties of his poetry would be excluded. "The best parts of language," he maintains, are "the product of philosophers not of clowns and shepherds." Moreover, poetry is 'essentially ideal and generic', and 'avoids and excludes all' that is accidental, specific, special.

(b) The defects of Wordsworth are: (1) 'inconstancy' and incongruity of style—sudden transition from superior to inferior style, which produces a feeling of incongruity or disharmony, (2) 'matter-of-factness' or excessive attention to minute details, fit for biography or history not for poetry, (3) "undue predilection for the *dramatic* forms in certain poems" resulting in the confusion of styles, (4) in-

tensity of feeling disproportionate to the value of the objects described, and (5) 'mental bombast' or 'thoughts and images too great for the subject'. Coleridge is careful to emphasize that these defects are occasional. They are all violations of the romantic principle of organic unity.

(c) The excellences of Wordsworth are: (1) "austere purity of language," i.e. a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning, (2) the 'weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments', not bookish, but fresh and original, derived from the poet's own 'meditative observation', (3) "the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs," (4) "the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature," (5) "a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man," and (6) his imaginative power in which "he stands of all modern writers nearest to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own."

(d) At the end he makes a spirited defence of Wordsworth against his detractors, who abused "him for vulgarity of style, subject, and conception," as also against his 'affected admirers, who praised him as a sweet, simple poet.'

For philosophic penetration and subtlety, for objectivity, for generosity of praise, and above all for delicacy of dissent, Coleridge's criticism of Wordsworth has no equal.

The romantic critics, except Coleridge, excelled also in the art of the personal essay. This prose form of which Goldsmith was the last great practitioner in the 18th century, received further development in the hands of Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey and Leigh Hunt. Intense individualists, they were greatly attracted to the cult of personality practised in this form. By talking intimately and entertainingly about themselves, each in his own way, these gifted writers left models which have been followed by a long line of subsequent writers from Stevenson onwards to our own day.

Charles Lamb (1775-1834), the prince among essayists, was a Londoner, both by birth and by life-long residence. Though a friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge, he didn't care for the country or solitude. He loved society and the crowded bustling life of London streets. Himself a 'character', he liked the odd in life and literature. His whimsicalities in taste, his prejudices, his idiosyncrasies, his quaint humour and fancy, his pathos—a blend of all these and much more not easily seized or described, gives his writings a charm for which there is no parallel in English literature outside the poets. To shake hands with Lamb for the first time is a landmark in reading experience. It is a pleasure one wants to savour again and again.

Lamb was educated at Christ's Hospital where he became an intimate friend of Coleridge. University education was beyond his resources and a scholarship carried with it the obligation to take

holy orders, a profession from which he was barred by his stammer. So at seventeen he became a clerk in the East India House from where he retired after nearly thirty-three years' service in 1826. An unhappy love affair unhinged his mind which necessitated a brief confinement in a madhouse. Then something more terrible happened. His sister, Mary, in a fit of homicidal mania killed their mother. This event determined the course of Lamb's future life. He remained a life-long bachelor in order to be able to devote himself to the care of his sister who had to live off and on in a madhouse. These tragic circumstances lend poignant interest to all his writings.

Lamb wrote verse, plays, and romances, but his fame rests principally on his criticisms of the older English drama, the *Essays of Elia* and the *Tales from Shakespeare*. The *Tales* (1807) were written at the suggestion of Godwin who at the time had become a publisher of Children's books. They were the joint work of Lamb and Mary, he doing the tragedies, she the comedies. They are a children's classic and too well-known to need discussion. His *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare, with Notes*, which appeared in 1808, established his reputation as a critic of the first rank. His brief notes are little gems of criticism which testify to Lamb's sympathetic insight into the neglected older drama. His views about Jacobean dramatists (Ford, Massinger, etc.) are startlingly at variance with those held by the majority of critics. Instead of condemning them for their fierce passions and violent crimes, he praises them for their 'honest boldness'. Later, he expressed his view of the Restoration comedy which is even more paradoxical. He defended it as romantic depicting not a real contemporary society, but an imaginary one without law, and therefore, without sin or vice! It was Lamb, again, who maintained the paradox that the tragedies of Shakespeare "are less calculated for stage performance than those of any other dramatist whatever."

Not many people will agree with these critical pronouncements. This is immaterial. In their profundity, subtlety, and imaginative character they are unique in the history of English criticism. They are all of a piece with his whimsical character. His denial of truisms and flouting of popular opinions proceeded from an inherent spirit of contradiction. Freakish humour was a part of his nature. He could be mischievous, rough, outrageous, or just nonsensical in his jests. Coleridge and Holcroft were discussing "man as he is and man as he ought to be." "Give me," Lamb interrupted, "man as he ought not to be." In a conversation with Carlyle he said: "There are just two things I regret in England's history: first, that Guy Fawkes' plot did not take effect (there would have been so glorious an explosion); second, that the Royalists did not hang Milton (then we might have laughed at them) &C. &C." He loved children and yet on one occasion proposed the toast of the "m-m-much ca-calumniated good King Herod."² A similar joke he perpetrated on a lady

²Herod, King of Judea, who ordered the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem, so that infant Jesus might be killed.

who asked him, "Mr. Lamb, how do you like babies?" He answered, "B-b-boiled, ma'am." He resented Coleridge's calling him 'my gentle-hearted Charles' in a poem. "For God's sake (I was never more serious)," he wrote to Coleridge, "don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. . . . In the next edition of the 'Anthology'. . . please to blot out gentlehearted and substitute drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question."

He practised the minor vices of smoking, drinking and snuff-taking, and overdid them all. A friend seeing him smoking a pipe of the strongest tobacco and puffing out clouds of smoke like a chimney, asked him how he had acquired the power of smoking at such a furious rate. Lamb replied, "I toiled after it, Sir, as some men toil after virtue." He often got drunk at friends' houses and had to be carried home unconscious. The letters of apology he wrote to his hosts afterwards display the same Puckish humour. In one of these he says, "My sister has begged me to write an apology to Mrs. A and You for disgracing your party; now it does seem to me, that I rather honoured your party, for every one that was not drunk (and one or two of the ladies, I am sure, were not) must have been set off greatly in the contrast to me. I was the scapegoat. The soberer they seemed. By the way, is magnesia good on these occasions? etc."

Lamb was not only a humorist, he was also a wit. He described Coleridge as "an archangel a little damaged." One of his superiors once complained, "You arrive late, Mr. Lamb." "But see how early I leave," was his answer. On another occasion a senior officer asked him, "What are you about, Mr. Lamb?" "About forty," answered Lamb innocently. When a doctor advised him to walk in the mornings on an empty stomach, Lamb asked, "Whose?"

Lamb's reckless humour, however, is only one side of the picture. His humanity, his tenderness of heart, makes the other. His devotion to his sister is one of the most moving examples of self-sacrifice in the history of English letters. Cowden Clarke reports that he once heard Lamb say to his sister "with his peculiar mode of tenderness beneath blunt, abrupt speech, 'You must die first, Mary'. She nodded, with her little quiet nod and sweet smile: 'Yes, I must die first, Charles'." It is this combination which makes him irresistible. His humour is so allied to pathos that it is hard to distinguish the one from the other. He had passed through the fires of hell, and walked under the perpetual shadow of tragedy. In later years, Mary's condition worsened and her visits to the Asylum became more and more frequent and longer. A streak of inherited insanity ran in the family and it may be doubted if Lamb himself was entirely without taint. In his heroic struggle against this misfortune, he found relief in eccentricity and freakish humour. His humour, thus, was born of suffering, and was at the same time an escape from it. It was, in terms of modern psychology, a sort of defence mechanism

against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

This blend of humour and humanity finds its most characteristic expression in the *Essays of Elia*.³ The first series appeared in the *London Magazine* (1820-23) and the second in 1833. It is these that have made Lamb immortal. Their charm consists principally in self-revelation and secondarily in their style. They are in the nature of personal correspondence in which Lamb talks informally and without reserve about himself—his likes and dislikes, his opinions, his experiences. Lamb with all his virtues and weaknesses, his fantastic humour and tender humanity, shines on every page of these essays. The interest of this self-portraiture is heightened by an old-world style that is reminiscent of such 'antiques' as Burton and Browne. It is so quaint, so individual and idiosyncratic, that there is no word but *Lambish* to describe it adequately. Though he participated wholeheartedly in the social life of his circle, Lamb lived, mentally and spiritually, in the past. He was more at home with the Elizabethans than with the moderns, and his style was insensibly moulded and coloured by his reading of the older writers. Because of this he was not a very popular author in his time. When a sonnet of his was rejected by the *Gem*⁴ "on the plea that it would *shock all mothers*," he wrote to a friend: "I am born out of time. I have no conjecture about what the present world calls delicacy. . . . I have lived to grow into an indecent character. When my sonnet was rejected, I exclaimed, 'Hang the age, I will write for Antiquity!'. . . His antiquated mode of writing is part of his charm. As he himself says in the *Preface to the Last Essays of Elia* (humorously supposed to be written by a friend after Elia's death): "They (Elia's writings) had not been *his*, if they had been other than such; and better it is, that a writer should be natural in a self-pleasing quaintness, than to affect a naturalness (so-called) that should be strange to him."

The humour of Lamb's essays is as fantastic as that of his life. But, however fantastic or however light, his jests have always some point. His objection to grace before meals might appear outrageous to the pious, and yet it is so sensible. Who will not agree that it is rank injustice to return "thanks—for what?—for having too much while so many starve?" that "To be thankful for what we grasp exceeding our" proportion, is to add hypocrisy to injustice," that "Gluttony and surfeiting are no proper occasions for thanksgiving?" Lamb's humour varies from essay to essay, from mood to mood. It has so many ingredients and such delicate shades that to define it is to count the tints of a butterfly. One has to read only a few of the essays to realize its Protean character. It can be ironical as in the essay above mentioned, or purely mocking ('Mrs. Battle's Opinion on Whist'), or fanciful ('A Dissertation upon Roast Pig'), or tenderly compassionate ('The Praise of Chimney Sweepers'), or wistfully pathetic ('Dream Children').

³Elia was the name of an Italian clerk with whom Lamb had worked in the South Sea House after leaving School.

⁴The *Gem* was a literary annual edited by T. Hood (1829-32).

The ability to appreciate Lamb is a sure test of one's taste for literature. By his essays he has won his way into the hearts of all appreciative readers. He is the most dearly loved of all English essayists and is the best known of English men of letters except Johnson.

Here are two excerpts from the *Essays of Elia*.

Mrs. Battle's Opinion on Whist

'A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game.' This was the celebrated wish of old Sarah Battle (now with God) who, next to her devotions, loved a good game at whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamblers, your half and half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game, and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or not; and will desire an adversary, who has slipped a wrong card, to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said, that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul; and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took, and gave, no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight: cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) 'like a dancer'. She sat bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that Hearts was her favourite suit.

I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play; or snuff a candle in the middle of a game; or ring for a servant, till it was fairly over. She never introduced, or connived at, miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards; and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand; and who, in his excess of candour, declared, that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind. She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do, and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards—over a book.

The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers

I like to meet a sweep—understand me—not a grown sweeper old—chimney-sweepers are by no means attractive—but one of those tender novices, blooming through their first nigritude, the maternal washings not quite effaced from the cheek—such as come forth with the dawn, of somewhat earlier, with their little professional notes sounding like the *peep peep* of a young sparrow; or liker to the matin lark should I pronounce them, in their aerial ascents not seldom anticipating the sun-rise?

I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses—

I reverence these young Africans of our own growth—these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption; and from their little pulpits (the tops of chimneys), in the nipping air of a December morning, preach a lesson of patience to mankind.

When a child, what a mysterious pleasure it was to witness their operation! to see a chit no bigger than one's—self enter, one knew not by what process, into what seemed the *faucis Averni*—to pursue him in imagination, as he went sounding on through so many dark stifling caverns, horrid shades! to shudder with the idea that 'now, surely, he must be lost for ever!' to revive at hearing his feeble shout of discovered day-light—and then (O fulness of delight) running out of doors, to come just in time to see the sable phenomenon emerge in safety, the brandished weapon of his art victorious like some flag waved over a conquered citadel! I seem to remember having been told, that a bad sweep was once left in a stack with his brush, to indicate which way the wind blew. It was an awful spectacle certainly; not much unlike the old stage direction in *Macbeth*, where the 'Apparition of a child crowned with a tree in his hand rises.'

Reader, if thou meetest one of these small gentry in thy early rambles, it is good to give him a penny. It is better to give him two-pence. If it be starving weather, and to the proper troubles of his hard occupation, a pair of kibed heels (no unusual accompaniment) be superadded, the demand on thy humanity will surely rise to tester.

Hazlitt (1778-1830). William Hazlitt was greater as a critic than as an essayist. He was unpopular because of his quarrelsome temper and strong radical views. He married twice, but both marriages ended in separation. His unamiable temper sorely tried even his best friends. He never forgave those who having been supporters of French Revolution in their youth had later defected to the Tory party. As a controversialist he was more than a match for the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood's* which had savagely attacked him. His famous *Letter to Mr. Gifford* is an example of his powers of retaliatory abuse.

The son of a Unitarian minister, Hazlitt had no formal education and his earlier ambition was to be a painter like his elder brother John who was a successful painter in London. He painted some portraits but discovered that his real vocation was literature. While still in the secluded village of Wem, where his father preached, he had heard Coleridge preach at Shrewsbury and come under his magic spell. His meeting with Coleridge is described in the essay, 'My first Acquaintance with Poets'. The god, however, failed, as he took to opium and Toryism, but not before giving Hazlitt a thrill of poetry. Coming to London he met Lamb and other literary friends and settled down to a career of writing. He wrote for the *Edinburgh* and other periodicals and won distinction as a critic of books, plays, and pictures, and also as a lecturer.

Leaving aside his criticism of art, Hazlitt's works fall under two heads: literary criticism and miscellaneous essays. His literary criticism is contained in. (1) *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, (2) *Lectures on the English Poets*, (3) *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, (4) *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*, (5) *The Spirit of the Age*. Of these, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* has become a classic. He surveys each play, intuitively seizes its beauties, illustrates them by quotations, and sums up his impressions in brilliant, clear-cut statements. Like Coleridge and Lamb, he appreciates Shakespeare as a dramatic poet rather than a stage craftsman. He shares with Lamb the

credit of discovering the Elizabethan drama, but unlike Lamb's his criticisms are sound commonsense. For example, he regards Restoration Comedy as a mirror of contemporary aristocracy and not a picture of an imaginary world. In the *Spirit of the Age* he appreciates his contemporaries by applying the same method of intuitive perception. As a critic Hazlitt is frank, fearless, and forthright. He praises Pope and the 18th century in defiance of the general fashion of the romantics. Though an admirer of Wordsworth, he did not hesitate to express his dissent from the poet's eulogy of country life. He was frank enough to say that he liked neither the country nor the peasant. Reviewing the *Excursion* he says, "Vanity and luxury are the civilisers of the world and sweeteners of human life."

Valuable as Hazlitt's criticism is, much of it is vitiated by his political bias in the case of older writers and by political and personal bias in the case of contemporaries. Though he insisted on the writer's objectivity, he himself is not objective in his criticism. He is hard on the royalist writers of the 17th century. He gives only faint praise to his contemporaries. Making due allowance for his prejudice, Hazlitt still remains one of the greatest of critics.

As an essayist too, Hazlitt is of the front rank. His miscellaneous essays fill many volumes: *The Round Table*, *Table Talk*, *The Plain Speaker*, *Sketches and Essays* and others. He had less charm than Lamb, but he had a strong individuality of his own which impressed itself on everything he wrote. What marks him out both as critic and as essayist is his 'gusto' or zest for enjoyment and the ability to express that enjoyment in strong clear terms. He enjoyed a book, a poem, a play, or a picture with the keenness and enthusiasm of an epicure. He loved whatever was strong, fresh and original in life or literature, and hated all that was insipid, affected or insincere. He liked always to be himself and hated all singularity or idiosyncrasy so much so that he did not want to be distinguished by any particular style. Nevertheless, he has a style whose chief characteristics are colloquial informality, directness and vigour. He decorates his essays with quotations, often mixed or twisted, which are hard to identify. He was speaking the truth when towards the end of his life he said, "I have written no commonplace, nor a line that licks the dust."

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), the third member of the so-called Cockney School is on a much lower level than Lamb and Hazlitt. He had, nevertheless, one advantage over both in that he knew Italian, while neither Lamb nor Hazlitt knew any language except their own. That probably explains his catholicity of taste displayed in the wide range of his appreciative criticism. He had neither the delicacy of Lamb, nor the force of Hazlitt, but on the whole, he is more akin to Lamb than to Hazlitt. His easy good nature, lively humour, irresponsible gaiety, and chatty voluble style give him an individuality which has a charm of its own. As a man Hunt was as fearless as Hazlitt. Like him he was a radical in politics and

suffered imprisonment for a libel on the Prince Regent. He was a born journalist and in his long career conducted a number of periodicals (the *Examiner*, the *Reflector*, the *Indicator*, etc.) to which he was often the sole or major contributor. His voluminous output includes such works as *Wit and Humour*, *Imagination and Fancy*, *A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla* (on pastoral poetry), *Men, Women, and Books*, *The Town*, *The Old Court Suburb*, and *Autobiography*.

Eclipsed by Lamb and Hazlitt, Hunt has lost his original appeal, but his historical importance is great. As a poet he had great influence on the earlier work of Keats. He brought Shelley and Keats together, and introduced them to the public. His periodicals provided a forum to the romantics before the appearance of the *London Magazine*. And finally, during his long career as a literary journalist he made no mean contribution to the development of the light miscellaneous essay by providing models for others. Hunt can still be read with pleasure. His buoyant spirit is nowhere better reflected than in the account he gives, in his *Autobiography*, of his life in prison. In reading the following extract from the *Autobiography*, it must be remembered that his imprisonment meant only restriction of movement. He was visited in prison by Lamb, Shelley, Keats, Hazlitt, Byron and other friends.

His Prison

The doctor then proposed that I should be removed into the prison infirmary; and this proposal was granted. Infirmary had, I confess, an awkward sound, even to my ears. I fancied a room shared with other sick persons, not the best fitted for companions; but the good-natured doctor (his name was Dixon) undeceived me. The infirmary was divided into four wards, with as many small rooms attached to them. The two upper wards were occupied, but the two on the floor had never been used; and one of these not very providently (for I had not yet learned to think of money) I turned into a noble room. I papered the walls with a trellis of roses; I had the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky; the barred windows I screened with Venetian blinds; and when my bookcases were set up with their busts, and flowers and a pianoforte made their appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side of the water. I look a pleasure, when a stranger knocked at the door, to see him come in and stare about him. The surprise on issuing from the Borough, and passing through avenues of a gaol, was dramatic. Charles Lamb declared there was no other such room, except in a fairy tale.

But I possessed another surprise; which was a garden. There was a little yard outside the room railed off from another belonging to the neighbouring ward. This yard I shut in with green palings, adorned it with a trellis, bordered it with a thick bed of earth from a nursery, and even contrived to have a grassplot. The earth I filled with flowers and young trees. There was an apple-tree, from which we managed to get a pudding the second year. As to my flowers, they were allowed to be perfect. Thomas Moore, who came to see me with Lord Byron, told me he had seen no such heart's-ease. I bought the *Parnaso Italiano* while in prison, and used often to think of a passage in it while looking at this miniature piece of horticulture:—

Mio picciol orto,
A me sei vigna, e campo, e selva, e prato—BALDI.
My little garden,
To me thou'rt vineyard, field, and meadow, and wood.

Here I wrote and read in fine weather, sometimes under an awning. In autumn, my trellises were hung with scarlet-runners which added to the flowery investment I used to shut my eyes in my arm-chair, and affect to think myself hundreds of miles off.

But my triumph was in issuing forth of a morning. A wicket out of the garden led into the large one belonging to the prison. The latter was only for vegetables; but it contained a cherry tree, which I saw twice in blossom. I parcelled out the ground in my imagination into favourite districts. I made a point of dressing myself as if for a long walk; and then, putting on my gloves, and taking my book under my arm, stepped forth, requesting my wife not to wait dinner if I was too late. My eldest little boy, to whom Lamb addressed some charming verses on the occasion, was my constant companion, and we used to play all sorts of juvenile games together. It was, probably, in dreaming of one of these games (but the words had a more touching effect on my ear) that he exclaimed one night in his sleep, 'No: I'm not lost; I'm found.' Neither he nor I were very strong at that time; but I have lived to see him a man of eight and forty; and wherever he is found, a generous hand and a great understanding will be found together.
(Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*)

De Quincey (1785-1859), well-known for his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, is one of the strongest figures in the history of English letters. He was an erratic genius whose merits as a prose-stylist have always divided critics. To some his prose is the very perfection of the ornate style; to others it is sheer humbug: the truth would seem to be between the two extremes.

The son of a rich Manchester linen merchant, Thomas De Quincey was educated at Manchester Grammar School and Oxford. He ran away from school just when he could have proceeded to the University on a scholarship. After a year's life of vagrancy in the hills of Wales among shepherds and gypsies and later in the streets of London, he was found and entered Oxford. His career there was brilliant; he passed in all his written tests, but was so frightened at the thought of the *viva voce* that he left the University without his degree.

It was at Oxford that he began taking opium to relieve neuralgic pains and he continued its use intermittently throughout his life. He was of a dreamy temper which was aggravated by his addiction to opium. The drug acting on his sensitive imagination induced a confusion of dreams, some magnificent, some horrible. These together with his earlier experiences of vagrancy are described in his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, which first appeared in instalments in the *London Magazine* and were later published in book form in 1822.

Having lost most of his fortune by excessive generosity and unworldliness (he gave Coleridge £300 anonymously) he was driven to earn his living by journalism. Though possessed of vast and various learning, including German metaphysics, it is curious that he wrote only two books, neither of which is of any importance (one a novel, the other on political economy). Almost all his voluminous work consists of miscellaneous essays contributed to periodicals. These were collected in fourteen volumes just before his death.

He lived at Grasmere in the neighbourhood of the Lake poets for twenty years. Then, invited to join the staff of *Blackwood's*, he with his family removed to Edinburgh, where he lived a most erratic life till his death in 1859 at the age of seventy-four.

De Quincey's fame rests principally on his autobiographical writings: *The Confessions* the best known, *Suspiria De Profundis*, *The English Mail Coach*, *Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts*. Of his critical essays the best examples are his *Literary Reminiscences* containing interesting sketches of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Keats, Shelley, Landor; *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth*, *Literature of Knowledge and Literature of Power*.

Fair criticism must strike a balance between De Quincey's faults and virtues. His faults are obvious. The first is his long-windedness, his habit of idle rambling before coming to the point; the second is ostentatious display of learning; the third is his cheap humour. In the midst of a serious passage of exposition or narrative he will suddenly fly off at a tangent to indulge in pedantry or childish jocularities. On the other hand, his prose at its best rises to heights of eloquence unmatched in any save the great seventeenth century masters: Browne and Taylor.

A London Waif

Towards nightfall I went down to Greek Street, and found, on taking possession of my new quarters, that the house already contained one single inmate,—a poor, friendless child, apparently ten years old; but she seemed hunger-bitten; and sufferings of that sort often make children look older than they are. From this forlorn child I learned that she had slept and lived there alone for some time before I came; and great joy the poor creature expressed when she found that I was in future to be her companion through the hours of darkness. The house could hardly be called large—that is, it was not large on each separate storey; but, having four storeys in all, it was large enough to impress vividly the sense of its echoing loneliness; and, from the want of furniture, the noise of the rats made a prodigious uproar on the staircase and hall; so that, amidst the real fleshy ills of cold and hunger, the forsaken child had found leisure to suffer still more from the self-created one of ghosts. Against these enemies I could promise her protection; human companionship was in itself protection; but of other and more needful aid I had, alas, little to offer. We lay upon the floor, with a bundle of law-papers for a pillow, but with no other covering than a large horseman's cloak; afterwards, however, we discovered in a garret an old sofa-cover, a small piece of rug, and some fragments of other articles, which added a little to our comfort. The poor child crept close to me for warmth, and for security against her ghostly enemies. When I was not more than usually ill, I took her into my arms, so that, in general, she was tolerably warm, and often slept when I could not. . . .

Whether this child were an illegitimate daughter of Mr. Brunell, or only a servant, I could not ascertain; she did not herself know; but certainly she was treated altogether as a menial servant. No sooner did Mr Brunell make his appearance than she went below-stairs, brushed his shoes, coat, etc; and, except when she was summoned to run upon some errand, she never emerged from the dismal Tartarus of the kitchens to the upper air until my welcome knock towards nightfall called up her little trembling footsteps to the front-door. Of her life during the daytime, however, I knew little but what I gathered from her own account at night; for, as soon as the hours of business commenced, I saw that

my absence would be acceptable and, in general, therefore, I went off and sat in the parks or elsewhere until the approach of twilight.

(*Confessions of an English Opium Eater*)

Landor (1775-1864) has been noticed before as a minor poet. His stature as a prose writer is higher, but definitely not of the first rank. In fact, the qualified praise given to De Quincey needs to be further diluted in his case. He is more affected, more ostentatious. He was rather a lonely figure in the romantic era. He has been described as a classical writer in the romantic age; it would be more correct to say he was a romantic, writing in the classical style—a sort of cross between classic and romantic. His life and his works present sharp contrasts. Like Byron he was a rich aristocrat with a passionate love of political liberty; he was rusticated from Oxford for his ultra republicanism. He had a wilful and ungovernable temper and quarrelled with his father, family, friends, neighbours—everybody with the exception of Southey. He dissipated his fortune in lawsuits and extravagant living. And yet in his writings he sought the high moral idealism and restraint of the great classical masters.

In his *Imaginary Conversations* (1824-54) he brings together characters from all ages, from classical antiquity down to his own times.

The *Conversations* are too elaborate and precise to be dialogue. The characters do not come alive. They are the mouthpieces of Landor whose extravagant and capricious opinions are quite at variance with classical coolness and restraint. Landor had neither a sense of character nor the necessary detachment to write convincing dramatic prose. Lamb, Hazlitt, and De Quincey, frankly revealed their personalities in their essays. Landor, as rank an individualist as they, attempted to mask his individualism by a classical style. In doing so he succeeded only in becoming stilted and pompous.

As in the case of De Quincey, when due allowance has been made for these too obvious faults, it must be admitted that, at times, Landor achieves poetic prose of the highest order. The most readable of the *Conversations* are those cast in the form of letters exchanged between Aspasia, a young maiden of Asia Minor, and Pericles in the age of Athens's greatest glory. Elaboration and elevation of style are not so incongruous in letters as in oral conversation.

Landor never has been and never will be a popular writer. His own assessment of himself as an author expressed in a characteristically elaborate metaphor was correct, "I shall dine late, but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select; I neither am nor ever shall be popular." Two extracts follow. The first is from a Conversation between *Aesop and Rhodope*. Rhodope, a Greek courtesan, and a fellow-slave, was carried to Egypt where she became Queen and is supposed to have built the third pyramid. The second is from *Pericles and Aspasia*.

Rhodope's Father

Rhodope. Never shall I forget the morning when my father, sitting in the coolest part of the house, exchanged his last measure of grain for a chlamys of scarlet cloth fringed with silver. He watched the merchant out of the door, and then looked wistfully into the corn-chest. I, who thought there was something worth seeing, looked in also, and, finding it empty, expressed my disappointment, not thinking however about the corn. A faint and transient smile came over his countenance at the sight of mine. He unfolded the chlamys, stretching it out with both hands before me, and then cast it over my shoulders. I looked down on the glittering fringe and screamed with joy. He then went out; and I know not what flowers he gathered, but he gathered many; and some he placed in my bosom, and some in my hair. But I told him with captious pride, first that I could arrange them better, and again that I would have only the white, and I had placed a few of them according to my fancy, I told him (rising in my slipper) he might crown me with the remainder. The splendour of my apparel gave me a sensation of authority. Soon as the flowers had taken their station on my head, I expressed a dignified satisfaction at the taste displayed by my father, just as if I could have seen how they appeared! But, he knew that there was at least as much pleasure as pride in it, and perhaps we divided the latter (alas! not both) pretty equally. He now took me into the market-place, where a concourse of people was waiting for the purchase of slaves. Merchants came and looked at me; some commending, other disparaging; but all agreeing that I was slender and delicate, that I could not live long, and that I should give much trouble. Many would have bought the chlamys, but there was something less saleable in the child and flowers.

Aesop. Had thy features been coarse and thy voice rustic, they would all have pacted thy cheeks and found no fault in thee.

Rhodope. As it was, every one had bought exactly such another in time past, and been a loser by it. At these speeches I perceived the flowers tremble slightly on my bosom, from my father's agitation. Although he scoffed at them, knowing my healthiness, he was troubled internally, and said many short prayers, not very unlike imprecations, turning his head aside. Proud was I, prouder than ever, when at last several talents were offered for me, and by the very man who in the beginning had undervalued me the most, and prophesied the worst of me. My father scowled at him, and refused the money. I thought he was playing a game, and began to wonder what it could be, since I never had seen it played before. Then I fancied it might be some celebration because plenty had returned to the city, in so much that my father had bartered the last of the corn he hoarded. I grew more and more delighted at the sport. But soon there advanced an elderly man, who said gravely, 'Thou hast stolen this child: her vesture alone is worth above a hundred drachmas. Carry her home again to her parents, and do it directly, or Nemesis and the Eumenides will overtake thee. Knowing the estimation in which my father had always been holden by his fellow citizens, I laughed again, and pinched his ear. He, although naturally choleric, burst forth into no resentment at these reproaches, but said calmly, 'I think I know thee by name, O guest! Surely thou art Xanthus the Samian. Deliver this child from famine'.

Again I laughed aloud and heartily; and, thinking it was now my part of the game, I held out both my arms and protruded my whole body toward the stranger. He would not receive me from my father's neck, but he asked me with benignity and solicitude if I was hungry: at which I laughed again, and more than ever; for it was early in the morning, soon after the first meal, and my father had nourished me most carefully and plentifully in all the days of the famine. But Xanthus, waiting for no answer, took out of a sack, which one of his slaves carried at his side, a cake of wheaten bread and a piece of honey-comb, and gave them to me. I held the honey-comb, to my father's mouth, thinking it the most of a dainty. He dashed it to the ground, but seizing the bread, he began to devour it ferociously. This also I thought was in play; and I clapped my hands at his distortions. But Xanthus looked on him like one afraid; and smote the cake from him, crying aloud, 'Name the price.' My father now placed me in his arms, naming a price much below what the other had offered, saying, 'The Gods are ever with thee, O Xanthus! therefore to thee do I consign my child! But while Xanthus was

counting out the silver, my father seized the cake again, which the slave had taken up and was about to replace in the wallet. His hunger was exasperated by the taste and the delay. Suddenly there arose much tumult. Turning round in the old woman's bosom who had received me from Xanthus, I saw my beloved father struggling on the ground, livid and speechless. The more violent my cries, the more rapidly they hurried me away; and many were soon between us. Little was I suspicious that he had suffered the pangs of famine long before: alas! and he had suffered them for me. Do I weep while I am telling you they ended? I could not have closed his eyes; I was too young; but I might have received his last breath: the only comfort of an orphan's bosom. Do you now think him blameable, O Aesop?

(*Aesop and Rhodope*)

Aspasia at the Theatre

How fortunate! to have arrived at Athens, at dawn, on the twelfth of Elaphebolion. On this day began the festivals of Bacchus, and the theatre is thrown open at sunrise.

What a theatre! What an elevation! What a prospect of city and port, of land and water, of porticoes and temples, of men and heroes, of demi-gods and gods!

It was indeed my wish and intention, when I left Ionia, to be present at the first of the Dionysiacs; but how rarely are wishes and intentions so accomplished, even when winds and waters do not interfere!

I will now tell you all. No time was to be lost, so I hastened on shore in the dress of an Athenian boy, who came over with his mother from Lemnos. In the giddiness of youth he forgot to tell me that, not being yet eighteen years old, he could not be admitted, and he left me on the steps. My heart sank within me, so many young men started and whispered; yet never was stranger treated with more civility. Crowded as the theatre was (for the tragedy had begun), every one made room for me. When they were seated, and I too, I looked toward the stage; and behold there lay before me, but afar off, bound upon a rock a more majestic form, and bearing a countenance more heroic, I should rather say more divine, than ever my imagination had conceived. I know not how long it was before I discovered that as many eyes were directed toward me as toward the competitor of the gods. I was neither flattered by it nor abashed. Every wish, hope, sigh, sensation, was successively with the champion of the human race, with his antagonist Zeus, and his creator Aeschylus. How often, O Cleone, have we throbbed with his injuries! how often, hath his vulture torn our breasts! how often have we thrown our arms round each other's neck, and half-renounced the religion of our fathers! Even your image, inseparable at other times, came out across me then: Prometheus stood between us. He had resisted in silence and disdain the cruellest tortures that Almightiness could inflict: and now arose the Nymphs of Ocean, which heaved its vast waves before us; and now they descended with open arms and sweet benign countenances, and spake with pity; and the insurgent heart was mollified and quelled.

(From *Pericles and Aspasia*)

William Cobbet (1762-1835). The oldest of the group noticed in this chapter, William Cobbet, presents a refreshing contrast to the learned pedantries of De Quincey and Landor. The self-educated son of a farmer, he served as a soldier and showed his toughness by exposing the abuses of army administration. To escape consequences he migrated to America where he made a name as a reckless journalist by writing pro-British and anti-French pamphlets under the very apt pseudonym of 'Peter Porcupine'. Libel suits drove him back to England in 1800. Starting as a Tory journalist in his weekly newspaper *Political Register* he gradually turned Radical and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for his outspoken attacks on the Government. Undeterred, he continued his paper which attained

a very large circulation and had considerable influence in promoting Parliamentary reforms. He sat in the Reformed Parliament from 1832 till his death in 1835. He wrote a number of books of which his *Advice to Young Men* (1829) and *Rural Rides* (1830) are the best known, the first profitable and the second pleasant reading. Essentially a farmer, he wrote authoritatively on agricultural subjects. In the *Rural Rides* he depicts the English countryside of his time and adds agricultural and political comments.

Cobbet wrote a plain vernacular style—clear, colloquial, vigorous—which is not without literary and personal flavour. The following extract illustrates his arrogant humour.

The Sandpit

In quitting Tilford we came on to the land belonging to Waverly Abbey, and then, instead of going on to the town of Farnham, veered away to the left towards *Wrecklesham*, in order to cross the Farnham and Alton turnpike road, and to come on by the side of *Crondall* to *Odiham*. We went a little out of the way to go to a place called the *Bourn*, which lies in the heath at about a mile from Farnham. It is winding narrow valley, down which, during the wet season of the year, there runs a stream beginning at the *Holt Forest*, and emptying itself into the *Wey* just below Moor-Park, which was the seat of *Sir William Temple* when *Swift* was residing with him. We went to this Bourn in order that I might show my son the spot where I received the rudiments of my education. There is a little hop-garden in which I have scores of times run to follow the hounds, leaving the hoe to do the best that it could to destroy the weeds; but the most interesting thing was a sand-hill, which goes from a part of the heath down to the rivulet. As a due mixture of pleasure with toil, I, with two brothers, used occasionally to *disport* ourselves, as the lawyers call it, at this sand-hill. Our diversion was this: we used to go to the top of the hill, which was steeper than the roof of a house; one used to draw his arms out of the sleeves of his smock-frock, and lay himself down with his arms by his sides; and then the others, one at head, and the other at feet, sent him rolling down the hill like a barrel or a log of wood. By the time he got to the bottom, his hair, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, were all full of this loose sand; then the others took their turn, and at every roll, there was a monstrous spell of laughter. I had often told my sons of this while they were very little, and I now took one of them to see the spot. But, that was not all. This was the sort of education; and I am perfectly satisfied that if I had not received such an education, or something very much like it; that, if I had been brought up a milkshop, with a nursery-maid everastlingly at my heels, I should have been at this day as great a fool, as inefficient a mortal as any of these frivolous idiots that are turned out from Winchester and Westminster School, or from any of those dens of dunces called Colleges and Universities. It is impossible to say how much I owe to that sand-hill; and I went to return it my thanks for the ability which it probably gave me to be one of the greatest terrors, to one of the greatest and most powerful bodies of knaves and fools, that ever were permitted to afflict this or any other country.

(*Rural Rides*)

BOOK EIGHT

CHAPTER 37

VICTORIAN LITERATURE : POETRY (1)

Tennyson—Browning—Mrs. Browning—Arnold—Clough—Fitzgerald.

The poetry of the Victorian era was a continuation of romanticism. It has beauty and variety enough, but is less inspiring than the poetry of the preceding age. The dominant figures were Tennyson and Browning, a pair in strong contrast to each other. Tennyson, the greatest and most popular poet of his day, is now considered outmoded like everything Victorian, while Browning a lesser artist but independent of his times, has gone up in esteem on the strength of his bolder and more optimistic philosophy.

TENNYSON

Alfred Tennyson (1809-92), the third son of a Lincolnshire clergyman, was educated at Louth Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1827, a year before he entered the university, he published *Poems by two Brothers*. In 1829 he won the Chancellor's prize for poetry for his poem *Timbuctoo*. In 1830 appeared his *Poems Chiefly Lyrical*, followed two years later by a volume called *The Lady of Shalott and Other Poems* (1832). These volumes were ridiculed by critics and Tennyson sank into silence for ten years. Then in 1842, he published two thin volumes of poetry, which won instant recognition. (The first volume contained chiefly old poems revised and improved, while the second contained pieces almost all new). His subsequent work extending over half a century only confirmed and consolidated his fame. The year 1850 has a special importance in his life: he succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate, married and published his *In Memoriam*, the famous elegy on the death of his

friend Arthur Henry Hallam. In 1884 he was made a Peer. He died in 1892 aged 83.

Works

Tennyson's earliest volume *Poems by Two Brothers* (1827) (actually written by three—himself and his elder brothers Charles and Frederick) is of little interest and may be ignored. His next volume *Poems Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) first announced a new and original poet in the line of Keats. Though youthful and, in the main, irresponsible, such pieces in it as *Mariana*, *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, *A Dirge* marked out his extraordinary gift of expression and his penchant for pathos. The lyric note struck in this volume continues in the volume *Lady of Shalott and Other Poems* (1832) with the difference that his previous irresponsibility begins to give place to philosophic thought. It contained among others, *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Two Voices*, *The Miller's Daughter*, *Oenone*, *The Sisters*, *The Palace of Art*, *The Lotos-eaters*, *A Dream of Fair Women* and two patriotic poems 'You ask me, Why tho', ill at ease', 'Of old sat Freedom on the heights'. These revised or recast were issued in 1842 along with new poems which included such well-known pieces as *Morte D'Arthur*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, *Dora*, *St. Simon Stylites*, *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, *Locksley Hall*, *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, 'Break, Break, Break'. The lyric note in the newer poems is still dominant; we have here as in the previous volume (1832) a few narrative poems and a little more of philosophy.

The Lady of Shalott, *Morte D'Arthur*, *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*.

These four fragments were the prelude to the poet's longer narratives *The Idylls of the King*.

The Lady of Shalott. This poem is fully developed in *Launcelot and Elaine*, one of the *Idylls of King*. The Lady of Shalott is no other than Elaine, daughter of the Lord of Astolat. While on a secret visit to a tournament, Launcelot is welcomed by Elaine's father. Elaine falls in love with him, and dies of his love when he has returned to Arthur's Court. She is carried in a barge to Arthur's palace at Camelot, identified by Malory with Winchester.

Morte D'Arthur. This is too well known to need any comment, except that in the later *Idylls of the King*, it was incorporated in the *Passing of Arthur*.

Sir Galahad. Galahad was the son of Launcelot by Elaine. He was the purest of Knights and so could see the Holy Grail. *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*. The story of their guilty love is told in the *Idylls*. Her ending up as a nun is described in *Guinevere*, last but one of the *Idylls*.

The Two Voices. This is among the earliest attempts of Tennyson to solve the riddle of life. A voice tells him that human life is all

pain and despair and ends in nothingness and that it would be best for him to commit suicide. A second voice comes to his rescue and speaks of 'a hidden hope'. In a moment the poet's doubts are dispelled as he realises that all Nature is love. There is no cause for discontent. 'Rejoice! Rejoice!'

The Miller's Daughter, The Gardener's Daughter, Oenone. These three idylls are among the finest love poems in English. In the first, the Squire, now an old man, recounts in a reminiscent mood the happy days he has passed with his wife Alice (the miller's daughter). He tells her how Love had made a new man of him, how his mother had at first objected to a match below him and how after inspecting Alice she had embraced her. He also asks Alice to sing a couple of songs he had written and given her. Here is the first stanza of the song given her on the wedding day—

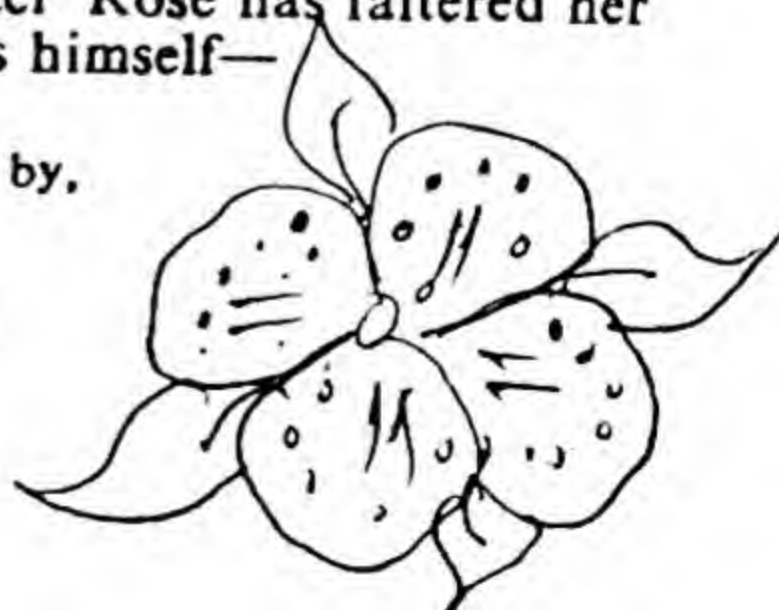
It is the miller's daughter,
And she is grown so dear, so dear,
That I would be the jewel
That trembles in her ear:
For hid in ringlets day and night,
I'd touch her cheek so warm and white.

The Gardener's Daughter. In this the poet himself is the lover. The poet and Eustace, 'brothers in Art' are inseparable friends. Eustace has painted a portrait of his sweetheart Juliet. The poet pronounces it a masterpiece—a masterpiece, however, which has been painted not by Eustace but by Love, 'A more ideal Artist he than all'. At this Juliet laughingly asks the poet to go and see the Gardener's daughter, for after seeing her he could scarcely fail to match Eustace's masterpiece. The friends accordingly visit Rose in her suburban garden. The poet falls madly in love with her and after a few months' courtship wins her love. Here is the poet's description of her beauty as she stood straightening a rose bush, half in shade and half in light—

But the full day dwelt on her brows and sunn'd
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man young.

Contrasted with this exuberance of romantic fancy is the poet's reticence in describing his thrilling bliss after Rose has faltered her acceptance 'I am thine'. He suddenly checks himself—

And while I mused, Love with knit brows went by,
And with a flying finger swept my lips,
And spake, 'Be wise: not easily forgiven
Are those, who setting wide the doors that bar
The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
Let in the day'.



A far cry from Keats and Fanny Brawne!

Oenone. In order to understand this poem, it is necessary to understand the background which is as follows.

Paris, a son of Priam, King of Troy, was abandoned as a child because of a prophecy that he would bring destruction on Troy, but was brought up by the shepherds on Mt. Ida.

To the wedding of Peleus and Thetis (father and mother of Achilles) all the goddesses had been invited except Eris, the goddess of Discord. To avenge the insult she threw on the banqueting table a golden apple inscribed 'To the fairest'. Three goddesses claimed the apple—Hera, Queen of the heavens, Pallas Athene, goddess of wisdom, and Aphrodite, goddess of beauty. The gods appointed Paris umpire to settle the dispute. To influence his judgment, each goddess offers him a bribe. Hera offers royal power, Pallas wisdom, and Aphrodite the most beautiful woman in Greece for wife. Paris falls for this last offer and decides in favour of Aphrodite. Later recognised as Priam's son he visited Sparta and eloped with Helen, wife of King Menelaus. This led to the siege and destruction of Troy by the Greeks.

The story of *Oenone* belongs to the shepherd days of Paris. He had lived with this nymph of Mt. Ida for a number of years before he was called upon to decide the issue of beauty among the three goddesses. Her grief at his disappearance is the subject of Tennyson's poem.

In this poem occurs the famous quotation—

Self reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead to sovereign power.

It is spoken by Pallas to contradict Hera who has offered Paris royal power. Her counsel is 'to live by law/Acting the law we live by without fear; And, because right is right, to follow right/Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence'.

The sequel to this story is given in *The Death of Oenone*, a later poem.

The Sisters. A very short poem of revenge. Of the two sisters of a good family, one was seduced by a handsome lord and she died of shame. The other sister avenged the shame of her 'ancient blood' by contriving to win the lord's love and stabbing him to death in his sleep. Mark the mocking tone of the last stanza—

I curl'd and comb'd his comely head,
He look'd so grand when he was dead.
The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
I wrapt his body in the sheet,
And laid him at his mother's feet.
O the Earl was fair to see!

The Palace of Art. This is a protest against the pride and luxury of Art—against the fashionable slogan of 'Art for Art's sake.' A lover of Beauty builds a lordly mansion on a huge crag platform, smooth as burnish'd brass; inaccessible and away from the haunts of men. He surrounds it with all kinds of beauties of Nature and of Art—courts, lawns, fountains, streams and statuary. The rooms are hung with curtains depicting every kind of beautiful landscape, 'fit for every mood of mind'—grave or gay, sweet or stern. The most pleasing of these curtains is the one depicting 'an English home—gray twilight pour'd/On dewy pastures, dewy trees/.....A haunt of ancient peace.'

After four years of such indulgence, his soul is sick with utter loneliness and longs for human company—

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.
'Make me a cottage in the vale', she said,
Where I may mourn and pray.

The lesson of the poem is enforced in the dedicatory lines—

And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall be
Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
Howling in utter darkness.

The Lotos-eaters. The Greek mariners who decide to stay on in the land of the lotos-fruit typify the class of people who are content to rest on their oars—people who think they have toiled enough and are entitled to spend their remaining days in slothful ease. They rationalise their attitude by arguing that 'Death is the end of life; ah, why/Should life all labour be? There is no true joy but calm!'

Ulysses. The converse of the Lotos-eaters inasmuch as it is in scorn of sloth. The aged Ulysses 'Cannot rest from travel; I will drink life to the lees'. He thinks it would be vile to hoard his life 'for some three suns' when his aged spirit still yearns for knowledge and adventure. Every hour can bring 'new things'. 'Strong in will', he exhorts his companions, old and tired as they are, 'to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield'. True joy, he finds, is in constant endeavour.

A Dream of Fair Women. Written after the example of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, Tennyson's dream describes eight beautiful women; Helen of Troy, Iphigenia, Cleopatra, Jephtha's daughter, Rosamund, Electra, Joan of Arc, and Alcestis. All are tragic figures. Helen caused the Trojan War and the destruction of Troy. Iphigenia was offered by her father Agamemnon as a sacrifice to appease Artemis (Diana) who had becalmed the Greek fleet at Aulis. When she was about to be slain, the goddess pitying her substituted a deer at the altar and carried her off to Tauris (Crimea), there to be her priestess. Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, was the cause of the death and downfall of Mark Antony. Jephtha's daughter was sacrificed by her

father in fulfilment of a vow. Jephtha, a judge of Israel, had vowed that if he was victorious over the Ammonites, he would sacrifice the first thing that came out of his house to meet him. This proved to be his daughter. Rosamund, the mistress of Henry II, is supposed to have been poisoned by his queen Eleanor. Electra's father Agamemnon was murdered by his wife Clytemnestra. Joan of Arc, the French peasant girl, drove the British out of France (15th century). The British burnt her as a witch. In Greek mythology Alcestis (Alkestis) was the wife of Admetus, a king in Thessaly. Admetus was given a very short life, but Apollo persuaded the Fates to prolong his life, which request was granted on the condition that some one else came forward at the moment of his death to die for him. Alcestis offered herself and died. Hercules, however, rescued her from Death and restored her to Admetus.

Dora. An idyll of the countryside, remarkable for deep pathos. The farmer Allan wanted his son William to marry Dora, his niece, whom he had brought up after the death of his brother. Dora who obeyed her uncle's will in all things was willing, but William refused. Enraged, the farmer turned William out of the house. William married a labourer's daughter Mary Morrison. A son was born to him, but he became very poor and his father wouldn't help him. Though the farmer had ordered Dora not to speak to William or his wife on pain of expulsion, she, nevertheless, helped the Williams secretly with such store as she could save. William, however, died of a fever and Mary was in acute distress.

Then Dora brought Mary's child in the hope that the sight of his grandson might soften the old man. The farmer took the child, but ordered Dora out of his house for disobedience. Mary decided to take her child back, for she thought the old man would make him hard and he would slight his own mother. The women came to the farmer's house and peeping through the door saw that the old man was fondling the child. Mary pleads for Dora and asks back the child, adding that though William had not regretted his marriage, he had said he was wrong to cross his father. At this the old man broke down saying—

I have been to blame, to blame, I have killed my son.
I have kill'd him—but I Loved him—my dear son.
May God forgive me!—I have been to blame.
Kiss me my children.

So they all lived together until Mary took another husband. Dora lived unmarried till her death.

St. Simeon Stylites. The poem is a satirical condemnation of asceticism. St. Simeon Stylites, complete with his rough goatskin shirt, iron collar round his neck and the cross in his hands—has lived thirty years on the top of a tall pillar. He has braved heat, cold, and rain and is now a mere skeleton. In the course of the day he makes twelve hundred bows to Christ, Virgin Mother, and the saints. He

has sought this high perch to escape from the devils who bothered him on the ground disturbing his readings and prayers with their monkeyish tricks. There is hardly any mortification of the flesh which he has not practised. God has made him 'an example to mankind/which few can reach to'. His constant clamour to God is to raise him to sainthood. He thinks his prayer has been heard and the hour of wearing the crown of sainthood has at long last come. As he lifts his arms to clutch the crown, 'it's gone!' Nevertheless, he prophesies that he 'shall die tonight,/A quarter before twelve', and calls from among the crowd below for a priest to administer him 'the blessed sacrament'. He has promised to leave his relics behind for them to worship—

And you may carve a shrine about my dust,
And burn a fragrant lamp before my bones,
When I am gather'd to the glorious saints.

Tithonus. In Greek mythology, Tithonus was the brother of Priam, King of Troy. He was so beautiful that Eos or Aurora, the goddess of dawn fell in love with him. At his request the goddess made him immortal, but he forgot to request eternal youth. The result was that he became old and shrivelled, a mere shadow. Life becoming unbearable, he prayed the goddess to restore him to earth and he was turned into a grass hopper. In Tennyson's poem he bewails his 'cruel immortality,' 'this gray shadow, once a man.' He envies the fate 'Of happy men that have the power to die'. It is foolish to desire immortality in the flesh—

Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

Locksley Hall. The poem is a monologue in which the speaker gives vent to his feelings of bitterness over his rejected love. He is revisiting Locksley Hall, the home of his youth and remembers the happy days he had spent there with his cousin Amy. They have loved each other but the 'shallow-hearted' Amy had yielded to the pressure of her worldly parents and rejected him in favour of a richer man who with 'lower feelings,' and 'narrower heart' was no better than a clown. He seeks comfort in contemplating the exciting times that lie ahead—the future bright with prospects of all-round progress and peace culminating 'In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.'

But this is only a passing mood. For what comfort can the march of science and the increase of man's knowledge bring to one whose youthful hopes have been blighted?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he
bears a laden breast,

Full of sad experience, moving toward the
Stillness of his rest.

So the mood of bitterness returns and he curses all women—

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions,
 matched with mine,
Are as moonlight Unto sunlight, and as water
 Unto wine.

This, he thinks, seems particularly true of England. He, therefore, wishes he had lived in the tropical East where women's passions are hotter and less uninhibited. He pictures himself as the father of dark children by a native woman—children who 'iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd' shall dive and run and 'Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun'.

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the
 rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring
 over miserable books.

This cynicism, again, is only a temporary whim, for he soon collects himself by affirming that he counts 'the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child'. And—

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day:
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Cursing the place he bids it a long farewell.

The sequel, *Locksley Hall Sixty-years After*, was published in 1886.

The Patriotic Poems. These two short poems define Tennyson's idea of Freedom. If the poet prefers to live in England in spite of its misty climate, it is because—

It is the land that freemen till,
That sober-suited Freedom chose
The land where girt with friends or foes
A man may speak the thing he will;
A land of settled government,
A land of just and fair renown,
Where Freedom slowly broadens down
From precedent to precedent.

Freedom, moreover, has the wisdom which scorns 'the falsehood of extremes.'

Break, Break, Break. A lyric memorial expressing the poet's

pathetic yearning for his dead friend Hallam. The place reference is to Clevedon Church where Hallam lies.

Later Poems

The Princess (1847). The most charming of Tennyson's longer poems, *The Princess*, deals with women's rights and their higher education. Starting in a mock-heroic style, it ends on a serious note.

A prince has been betrothed in childhood to Princess Ida, daughter of King Gama of a neighbouring country; but the Princess refuses to marry, having given herself up to the cause of women's higher education. She has established a University in her father's summer palace situated on the border. The prince and his two friends Cyril and Florian gain admission to the university in female disguise. They are detected by the two tutors, both widows—the faded and haughty Lady Blanche and the very young Lady Psyche. It was death for man to be found in the precincts of the University, but the tutors for different reasons keep quiet. Lady Psyche remains quiet because Florian is her brother, and Lady Blanche's silence is purchased by Cyril's diplomatic promise that the three friends would help to reinstate her as the right hand of the Princess—a position formerly held by her but now enjoyed by the younger Psyche. They are however betrayed to the Princess at a picnic. Cyril either under the influence of wine or out of sheer fun sings a coarse tavern song unfit for ladies. To make the exposure complete the Prince struck him on the chest blurting out 'Forbear, Sir'. At this the Princess and her retinue run helter-skelter, and the Princess missing a plank on the nearby bridge falls into the stream below. The prince with woman's dress and all jumps in and rescues her. In spite of this, however, the Princess is determined to punish the impostors.

In the meanwhile the prince's father arrives with an army and demands the release of his son and the fulfilment of the marriage contract. The Princess is adamant and it is proposed to decide the issue by a combat between fifty warriors on the side of the prince and fifty warriors on that of King Gama led by Arac, his eldest son. Arac's party is victorious and the prince and his friends lie wounded on the field of battle. The Princess visits the field and is moved to pity. The University is turned into a hospital where the wounded of either side are tenderly nursed. The prince is looked after by the Princess whose pity for him soon turns to love. She is won. The prince's friends are also rewarded. Cyril gets Psyche, and Florian Blanche's daughter Melissa.

The Princess is appropriately called 'A Medley'. Fantasy, romance, humour, pathos, suspense, drama, serious thought—all are woven together to make a tale that is as heart-warming as it is instructive. Tennyson's thesis about man-woman relationship is that—

The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink

Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free
 For woman is not undevelop'd man,
 But diverse: could we but make her as the man,
 Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
 Not like to like, but like in difference.
 The question of equality or inequality is irrelevant,
 seeing either sex alone
 Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
 Nor equal, nor unequal; each fulfils
 Defect in each. . . .

In short, man and woman have distinct individualities and are complementary to each other.

Of special interest in the poem are the beautiful lyrics introduced at intervals. The three most popular are given here.

Blow, Bugle, Blow

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

Tears, Idle Tears

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
 That brings our friends up from the underworld
 Sad as the last, which reddens over one
 That sinks with all we love below the verge;
 So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
 The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
 To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
 The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
 So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
 And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd

On lips that are for others; deep as love,
 Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
 O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

"Home they brought her warrior dead"

Home they brought her warrior dead
 She neither swoon'd nor uttered cry;
 All her maidens, watching, said,
 'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
 Call'd him worthy to be loved,
 Truest friend and noblest foe;
 Yet she neither spoke nor moved.
 Stole a maiden from her place,
 Lightly to the warrior stept,
 Took the face-cloth from the face;
 Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
 Set his child upon her knee—
 Like summer tempest came her tears—
 'Sweet my child, I live for thee'.

In Memoriam (1850). This poem in memory of Tennyson's friend Arthur Henry Hallam was written at intervals between 1833, (the year of Hallam's death in Vienna at the age of 22) and 1850. It is not one poem but a series of short poems reflecting the poet's varying moods of grief over a period of seventeen years. It has two strains, one personal, the other universal, which keep merging one into the other. The poet's grief for his dead friend and his desire to meet him in the flesh is gradually transformed into a sense of mystic or spiritual union—a realization, that is to say, that Hallam has become one with Nature and God, and Tennyson can find him everywhere.

CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
 I hear thee where the waters run;
 Thou standest in the rising sun,
 And in the setting thou art fair.
 What art thou then? I cannot guess;
 But tho' I seem in star and flower
 To feel thee some diffusive power,
 I do not therefore love the less.
 My love involves the love before;
 My love is vaster passion now;
 Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
 I seem to love thee more and more.
 Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
 I have thee still, and I rejoice,
 I prosper, circled with thy voice;
 I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

The wish and hope that the grave is not the end—

LV

Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul?
 Art God and Nature then at strife,
 That Nature lends such evil dreams?
 So careful of the type she seems,
 So careless of the single life;
 That I, considering everywhere
 Her secret meanings in her deeds,
 And finding that of fifty seeds,
 She often brings but one to bear,
 I falter where I firmly trod,

 And falling with my weight of cares
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs
 That slope thro' darkness up to God,
 I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
 And gather dust and chaff, and call
 To what I call the lord of all,
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

And what is this larger hope?

LIV

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
 That nothing walks with aimless feet;
 That not one life shall be destroyed,
 Or cast as rubbish to the void
 When God hath made the pile complete;
 That not a worm is cloven in vain;
 That not a moth with vain desire
 Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
 Or but subserves another's gain.
 Behold, we know not anything;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last—far off—at last to all,
 And every winter change to spring.
 So runs my dream: but what am I?
 An infant crying in the night:
 An infant crying for the light:
 And with no language but a cry.

What is it that disturbs the poet's faith and makes him fall into despondency? Doubt—the doubt cast by science. But the poet is not dismayed. He welcomes science and its doubt. He finds that science is not an enemy to faith, but a friend, for in fighting down our doubts in conquering them, we strengthen our faith—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
 Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Referring to Hallam he says—

XCVI

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength
 He would not make his judgement blind,
 He faced the spectres of the mind
 And laid them: thus he came at length
 To find a stronger faith his own;
 And Power was with him in the night,
 Which makes the darkness and the light,
 And dwells not in the light alone.

Science, indeed, is knowledge and as such is welcome; but knowledge divorced from love and faith is a dangerous demon. She needs to be guided by wisdom—

. . . Let her know her place:
 She is the second, not the first.
 A higher hand must make her mild,
 If all be, not in vain, and guide
 Her footsteps, moving side by side
 With wisdom, like the younger child.
 For she is earthly of the mind,
 But Wisdom heavenly of the soul,
 O, friend, who comest to thy goal
 So early, leaving me behind.
 I would the great world grew like thee,
 Who grewest not alone in power
 And knowledge, but by year and hour
 In reverence and in charity.

Reverence and charity, or Faith and Love—these two words sum up the poet's answer to the riddle of the Universe. Faith in God and love of humanity constitute the wisdom of life. Love of humanity, indeed, is implied in faith, for God is love. This faith, however is not the result of the foregoing discussion or of any logical reasoning. God and Immortality cannot be proved. They are things to be experienced and the poet has had that experience—

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
 I heard a voice "believe no more,"
 And heard an ever-breaking shore
 That tumbled in the Godless deep;
 A warmth within the breast would melt
 The freezing reasons colder part,
 And like man in wrath the heart
 Stood up and answer'd "I have felt."

This intense feeling of God's presence leads to peace—to the conviction that "all is well"—that the whole creation is moving towards 'one far-off divine event'.

To give a cheerful ending to the poem Tennyson added an Epilogue which takes the form of a marriage song in honour of his sister's marriage to Edward Lushington.

By far the most beautiful and moving section of the poem is that in which the poet speculates on what might have been had Hallam been allowed a normal span of life. It must be remembered that Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister—

When I contemplate all alone
 The life that had been thine below,
 And fix my thoughts on all the glow
 To which thy crescent would have grown;
 I see thee sitting crown'd with good,
 A central warmth diffusing bliss
 In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
 On all the branches of thy blood;
 Thy blood my friend, and partly mine;
 For now the day was drawing on,
 When thou should'st link thy life with one
 Of mine own house, and boys thine
 Had babbled 'Uncle' on my knee;
 But that remorseless iron hour
 Made cypress of her orange flower,
 Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.
 I seem to meet their least desire,
 To clap their cheeks, to call them mine
 I see their unborn faces shine
 Beside the never-lighted fire.
 I see myself an honour'd guest,
 Thy partner in the flowery walk
 Of letters, genial table-talk
 Or deep dispute, and graceful jest
 While now thy prosperous labour fills
 The lips of men with honest praise,
 And sun by sun the happy days
 Descend below the golden hills
 With promise of a morn as fair;
 And all the train of bounteous hours
 Conduct by paths of growing powers
 To reverence and the silver hair
 Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
 Her lavish mission richly wrought,
 Leaving great legacies of thought,
 Thy spirit should fall from off the globe;
 What time mine own might also flee,
 And link'd with thine in love and fate
 And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
 To the other shore, involved in thee,
 Arrive at last the blessed goal,
 And He that died in Holy Land
 Would reach us out the shining hand,
 And take us as a single soul.
 What reed was that on which I leant?
 Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
 The old bitterness again, and break
 The low beginnings of content.

The poignant pathos of these stanzas is more eloquent of the poet's grief than all the long-drawn-out lamentations of the rest of the poem. Indeed, the Elegy as a whole is disappointing. It is diffuse, prolix and padded. It is good only in parts. Its lame and puzzled

philosophy, however, is no fault of the poet. The agonising conflict between faith and doubt was a fact of his life as it was of the age he lived in, and he was honest enough to express the dilemma as best he could. No careful reader can fail to be impressed by sincerity of the poet's grief and the beauty of his expression, not the least of which is the music of the stanza now known as the 'In Memoriam stanza.' It has four octosyllabic lines rhyming abba. It was first used by Ben Jonson and later by some others, but nobody before Tennyson had used it for a long poem or to such good purpose. Tennyson's poem demonstrated its special suitability for meditative disquisition.

Maud (1855). This is the least satisfactory of Tennyson's longer poems, and was variously designated in the criticism of the time as 'Mad', 'Mud' etc. It is a monodrama in which a morbid and unbalanced young man relates his melodramatic story. His father has died suddenly in mysterious circumstances and his family has been ruined by financial losses as a result of his father's speculations. In both of his misfortunes he suspects foul play and the hand of the old lord of the neighbouring Hall, for he has become suddenly very rich. Ironically enough, the young man falls violently in love with Maud, the old lord's daughter, and in course of time succeeds in winning her love in spite of the disapproval of the girl's brother and a rival in the person of a 'new-made lord', 'first of his line'. One early morning after a ball at the Hall to which the hero has not been invited, he meets Maud in her garden; they are surprised by Maud's brother and his rival the 'new-made lord'. There is a duel in which the hero kills the brother. He is on the verge of mental collapse and flees abroad. He hears of Maud's death and becomes raving mad. He is, however, cured by the prospect of serving his country in a just war (the Crimean war).

The poem was attacked, among other things for its so-called jingoist doctrine justifying war in certain circumstances. This was sheer hypocrisy. The real objection to the poem was and is its general lack of balance and sobriety. Its slashing criticism of British character and materialism is, nevertheless, of some interest to us in this country. For instance, we read with surprise that adulteration of foodstuffs, so common in India, flourished even in Victorian England—

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,
And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life.

Even if its lack of unity be excused on the ground that the poem reflects varying moods of an immature youth, what connection is there between his recovery and the rest of the story? That he was restored to sanity by the booming of cannon is simply absurd. The only sensible course for such a madcap was to die.

The poem is a failure and is remembered only because of its beautiful lyrics, the most popular being 'Come into the garden, Maud'.

The Idylls of the King

From the vast literature on the subject—Welsh, French, and English—it appears that there is some historical basis for King Arthur. He was a chieftain or general in the 6th century. He also seems to have been one of the Welsh gods. According to Rhys the human general and the Welsh god were blended in the legends. Hence the magic and mystery surrounding his birth and death. His capital was Caerleon (Camelot) on Usk, which is identified by Malory with Winchester. The round table in the great hall at Winchester is popularly identified with the Round Table of Arthur. The circular table was obviously a device to avoid disputes as to the order of precedence among the Knights. It could seat 150 Knights. The market town of Glastonbury in Somersetshire, famous for its Abbey, also figures in the legends. St. Joseph of Arimathea (who begged Pilate for the body of Christ and buried it in his own ground) is said to have built a church in the isle of Avalon (isle of apples) where he deposited the Holy Grail, the cup in which he had collected the blood of Christ. Arthur and Guinevere are said to have been buried here. Thus, Avalon is identified with Glastonbury. The 'Glastonbury Thorn' which flowers at Christmas is said to have sprung from the staff of St. Joseph.

Tennyson's *Idylls* are based mostly on Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (see Book Three). Idyll (Gk.) means a little picture in verse (or prose) of a picturesque scene or incident, especially of rustic or simple life. Tennyson uses the word broadly in the sense of episode.

The Idylls of the King, twelve in number were published, at intervals between 1859 and 1885, but not in the chronological order of events described in them. In their final form the chronological order is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The coming of Arthur | 7. Launcelot and Elaine |
| 2. Gareth and Lynette | 8. The Holy Grail |
| 3. The Marriage of Geraint | 9. Pelleas and Ettarre |
| 4. Geraint and Enid | 10. The Last Tournament |
| 5. Balin and Balan | 11. Guinevere |
| 6. Merlin and Vivien | 12. The Passing of Arthur |

The Coming of Arthur. Arthur is supposed to be the son of Uther Pendragon (in Welsh it means Chief leader in war) and Ygerne. Doubt is cast upon his right to the throne of Uther because of the mystery surrounding his birth. Uther loved Ygerne, wife of Gorlois of Tintagil castle (on the north coast of Cornwall). Uther and Gorlois went to war and Gorlois was slain. Uther then forced Ygerne to wed him, but died a few months after. Arthur was born prematurely and was secretly delivered to Merlin who entrusted him to Sir Anton, an old

friend of Uther. In due course Merlin brought forth Arthur and by his craft had him crowned despite the protests of the barons who doubted his legitimacy. The barons rebelled and open war broke out.

While fighting the barons, Arthur sees and falls in love with Guinevere, daughter of Leodogran, King of Cameliard. He sends to ask her hand. Leodogran hesitates because of the uncertainty about Arthur's parentage, but his scruples are dispelled by the testimony of Bellicent, wife of Lot, King of Orkney, and Arthur's sister or rather half-sister, being the daughter of Gorlois by Ygerne. Arthur sends Launcelot to fetch Guinevere and they are married. He refuses tribute to Rome, and with the united strength of his Knights for a space, puts down the petty principedoms and in twelve battles drives out the heathen (the Saxon invaders). Thus making Britain one realm the King reigned, the purpose of his reign being to—

Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.

Then follow the tales of the Round Table.

Gareth and Lynette. Bellicent has three sons and two of them, Gawain and Modred, are already in the King's Court, when the third and bravest, Gareth, seeks his mother's permission to join them and serve the King. The too fond mother is unwilling at first, but yielding to the boy's insistent requests consents on the condition that he disguise himself and serve as a kitchen scullion a twelve month and a day. Reaching the court he offers himself as a kitchen servant and is handed over to the steward Kay. He is treated harshly, but doesn't complain, considering himself amply compensated by the joy of witnessing the jousts. His mother having heard of the boy's patient suffering relents, releases him from his pledge and sends arms. The boy tells his secret to the King, requesting him not to reveal his name and rank, and begs the first assignment which is granted. That very day Lynette, a damsel of high birth, enters the hall, seeking the King's justice and help of a Knight to deliver her sister Lyonors who is kept a captive by her four tyrannical brothers in order to force her into marriage. Arthur says his order exists to crush all wrong-doers and assigns the quest to Gareth. Lynette who had come hoping for Launcelot is disappointed and disgusted at getting a kitchen-knave. She turns and rides away, but is overtaken by Gareth. The proud damsel turns up her nose at the kitchen-knave, mocking and insulting him, but Gareth, unmindful of this treatment, does his duty, and one by one overthrows three brothers who block their way. Coping with the fourth he discovers that he is a mere boy disguised in frightful armour. Lynette is won over by the young Knight's courage, courtesy and gentleness, but the conclusion is uncertain—

And he that told the tale in older time
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he that told it later, says Lynette.

This is the most charming of the *Idylls*. Lynette's beauty is thus described—

A damsel of high lineage and a brow
May blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower.

Her petulant raillery heightens this beauty a hundredfold while Gareth's patient courtesy presents the ideal of chivalry in its most attractive form. The dialogues between the two provide one of the most delightful boy and girl comedies in the language.

The Marriage of Geraint and Geraint and Enid. These two stories originally formed one Idyll *Enid*. Here we have the reverse of the picture presented in Gareth and Lynette; the man is rough and the woman patient and forbearing. Queen Guinevere has been insulted in the person of her maid by a haughty rider who refuses to tell his name. Geraint, lord of Devon and a knight of Arthur's, goes in quest of this man to avenge the insult. He tracks him down—his name is Edyrn, the Sparrow-hawk—fights and overthows him and sends him to the court for an apology, but not before he has restored to his uncle, the old Earl Yniol, the earldom he had seized from him. Geraint then marries Yniol's daughter, his only child, and returns with her to the court. There is great love between Enid and Guinevere, now under the shadow of scandal. Fearing the corrupting influence of the queen on his wife, Geraint leaves the court for his own lands on the pretext of defending them.

In his excessive love for Enid, Geraint becomes forgetful of Knighthood and adventure, tilt and tournament, name and glory. His people begin to remark that he is uxorious and effeminate. All this makes Enid sad. Once, while thinking that perhaps her own unworthiness might be the cause of the shameful change in her husband, she utters the fatal words: 'Oh, me! I fear that I am no true wife!' Geraint who was only half-asleep hears the words and his fear is confirmed. Maddened with suspicion he now rides out into bandit-infested wilderness, ordering her to ride ahead of him and not to speak to him on any account. She sweet, loving, and self-sacrificing risks his anger by warning him of danger everytime she spied bandits lying in ambush. He, in spite of his mood, overcomes them all until in an encounter with earl Limours, a drunken ruffian and a former suitor of Enid, he falls from his horse and is seriously injured. He is carried to the hall of the bandit earl Doorm, where Enid tends his wounds. To test her to the utmost, Geraint feigns death. Doorm starts taking liberties with Enid, she shrieks, and Geraint wakes and kills him. Her unquestioning obedience, patient suffering and devotion convince him of her innocence, and he takes her back to his heart, vowing never to doubt her again.

Tagged on to this tale is a secondary episode, that of genuine repentance and complete reformation of Edyrn the Sparrow-hawk.

This extraordinary reformation of character Edyrn attributes to the 'fine reserve and noble reticence' of the court. The king himself is sure of Edyrn's conversion—

Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
As I will weed this land before I go.

Balin and Balan. This is a rather dull story of two quixotic Knights of Arthur's Court who fighting unwittingly kill each other. Balin, simple-minded but violent and irascible, is exiled for three years for the unknighly act of striking with a mailed hand a slave of the court. He and his brother Balan sit near a spring outside Camelot, challenge every Knight who passes, and overthrow them. Arthur too is challenged but he flattens them with a single blow. When asked to explain their strange behaviour, Balin says he wanted that Balan be made a Knight. The request is granted. The simple-minded Balan is filled with romantic devotion to the queen and asks her permission to wear the image of her royal crown on his shield, so that by gazing on it he may be cured of his 'heats' and become as gentle and courteous as Launcelot. He is a little disturbed, however, when he sees the queen and Launcelot together in a grove. Without seeking the King's permission he leaves the court in search of adventure.

Balan, in the meanwhile, has been assigned the adventure of killing a demon who strikes from behind. Balin reaches the castle of Gorlon, who is now ruling his lands in place of his father Pellam who has gone religious. Gorlon who has only recently and reluctantly paid the tribute due to Arthur, speaks scornfully of the queen's intrigue with Launcelot. This provokes Balin's 'heat' and he strikes down Gorlon. Ashamed of his violence he runs into the woods, hangs up the shield, stumbles, and lies stunned. The wily Vivien passing through the wood repeats the scandal of the queen, which confirmed his suspicion. Disillusioned by his idol he disfigures the royal crown of the shield and tramples upon it. Balan coming upon the scene and thinking that this must be the demon he is seeking, attacks him. They fight and are mortally wounded.

Merlin and Vivien. Duller than the foregoing tale of quixotic adventure, this is a story whose main spring is revenge. Vivien, the crafty, cynical, and malicious daughter of a man killed in fighting against Arthur, is filled with hate of the king. An orphan, she first drifts to the court of King Mark of Cornwall, and then to that of Arthur. Having gained admission by a crafty story that she is being pursued for her beauty by Mark, she spreads the scandal concerning Launcelot and the queen. In order to prosecute her revenge secure from the interference of Merlin, she pretends love for him and practises on the old wizard all her wit and craft until the poor man 'overtalked and overworn' yields and tells her the charm of 'woven paces and waving hands'. As he lay sleeping in the hollow of an oak, she uses the charm shutting him up there for ever.

Lancelot and Elaine. This, the most tragic of the *Idylls*, had

appeared in a different and briefer version in *The Lady of Shalott* (1832). Arthur possessed nine diamonds of a nameless King, one being given away to the bravest Knight at an yearly tournament of diamonds. Lancelot, the guilty lover of the queen had won eight of them and wished to present them to the queen when all the nine were won. The queen being unwell couldn't go to the last tournament, and mistaking her languid look, Lancelot though eager to go and win the central and last diamond, pretended to the King that he too couldn't go, because his last wound had not yet healed and prevented him from the saddle. As soon as the king had left, Guinevere reproached him and urged him to go, lest their enemies should say that the shameless lovers had stayed behind to have a good time in the absence of the king. So Lancelot goes disguised and is welcomed by the lord of Astolat. The lord's daughter, Elaine, the 'lily maid' of Astolat, falls in love with him. Giving his own shield to Elaine as a keepsake and borrowing from his host one—'blank or at least with some device not mine'—he leaves for the tournament accompanied by the host's younger son Lavaine. He wins the diamond, but is wounded and is carried to Astolat. He is nursed back to health by the loving care of Elaine who then expresses her wish to be his wife. He refuses this request because of his love for Guinevere—

The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Elaine's father asks him to break her passion by some discourtesy, but he could think of no worse discourtesy than leaving the place without bidding her farewell. Elaine pines away and dies. According to her dying wish her body is placed in a black barge which floats down to Camelot. In her right hand is the lily and in the left a letter declaring that she had died for love of Lancelot. All pity her, and Lancelot, 'a man made to be loved', is stricken with remorse. Retribution for his sin has begun.

The Holy Grail. Sir Percival has left Arthur's court and retired to an abbey to live a religious life. Almost the whole of the story of the quest of the Holy Grail is told by him in answer to the questions of a monk. The Holy Grail deposited by St. Joseph of Arimathea in his church at Glastonbury remained there for some time until sin grew in the world and it was carried away to Heaven and disappeared. The first person to see it in modern times was Percival's sister, a nun. Mere sight or touch of this cup healed a person of all ills. Percival's sister asked him to fast and pray in order to be able to see the vision. Percival spread this message among the other Knights.

One of the seats round the great Table was always vacant. Specially carved by Merlin it was called Siege Perilous (siege—seat), 'perilous for good and ill', for no man could sit in it without losing himself. Merlin once accidentally occupied it and was lost. One

summer night Sir Galahad decided to sit in it, crying, "If I lose myself, I save myself." The moment he sat down in the chair there appeared in the hall a vision of the Holy Grail accompanied by a blast and thunder—

A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud.
And none might see who bare it, and it past.

The Grail being covered with a luminous haze none of the knights except Galahad had seen it. They had only seen the light and heard the thunder. So Percivale then and there took a vow that he 'would ride a twelve month and a day in quest of it, until I found and saw it'. Thereupon, Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, Launcelot, Gawain and many others also took the same vow. The King returning from a quest was told of what had happened. On his inquiring if any one had seen the Grail, only Galahad shouted "I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me'."

The King was saddened, for he saw in the quest the beginning of the end of the Round Table. So after assembling at a last spectacular tournament the Knights dispersed.

After a year and a day only one tenth of the Knights returned. As the King had warned, none succeeded except Sir Galahad who had 'lost himself to save himself'. Percivale saw him ascending Heaven accompanying the Holy Grail. The others had chased 'wandering fires', mere illusions. Percivale and Sir Bors had only partial success in that they approached near or saw the vision of the sacred vessel. The gay, irreverent Gawain, realizing the quest was not for him had passed his time in a silken pavilion in the company of 'merry maidens' and bids goodbye for all time 'to holy virgins in their ecstasies'.

Elaborate as the story of the quest is, the real significance of the idyll lies in the attitude to it of Arthur himself. He keeps aloof and doesn't take the vow; for he is a king and his duty is to guard 'that which he rules', he 'may not wander from the allotted field before his work be done'; but being done—

Let visions of the night or of the day
Come as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
The light that strikes his eye-ball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again: Ye have seen what ye have seen.

Tennyson expresses through the mouth of Arthur his own highest

and deepest faith—that this body of flesh and blood is but a vision, an illusion, and God and the spirit the only Reality.

Pelleas and Ettarre. Arthur has filled the gap caused by the quest of the Holy Grail with new Knights. Pelleas a strong and simple minded youth while going to Arthur's court as a candidate for knighthood meets on the way the great lady Ettarre and falls in love with her. She has set her heart on the golden circlet which is the prize at the forthcoming Tournament of Youth proclaimed by the king. Seeing that he is strong and may win the prize, she flatters him with the promise of her love if he will fight for her. He fights, wins, and gives the circlet to her, while keeping the knightly sword—the prize—for himself. Having gained her object she suddenly changes her attitude to 'Sir Baby' and begins to loathe his very sight. He follows her—at some distance—to her castle, but finds the gates closed in his face. Thinking that perhaps this was the way of ladies to test the truth of their lovers, he patiently waits outside. Ettarre sends her three Knights to kill him, but he defeats them. She then orders him to be bound and carried to the castle and he meekly submits. Inside the castle he is mercilessly beaten, mocked, insulted and then thrust outside the gate. Gawain happening to pass that way shows great sympathy and undertakes to win Ettarre for him. Borrowing his armour he enters the castle by saying he has killed Pelleas. After a time Pelleas gets suspicious, enters the castle, and finds Gawain and Ettarre sleeping together in a grove. Stunned by Gawain's treachery, and Ettarre's heartlessness, he places his sword across the latter's throat, and dashes out of the castle hurling curses upon it and its owner. Coming upon Percivale he learns from him of the scandal of Launcelot and Guinevere as well as of the general faithlessness of Knights in the court. Returning to the capital he bumps into Launcelot coming from the opposite direction. When questioned he replies that he has no name and is out 'to blast and blaze the crime of Launcelot and the Queen'. They fight and he is defeated. In spite of his request to be slain, his life is spared and both return to the hall. At the sight of the queen whom he doesn't greet, Pelleas runs out, leaving the two to exchange doleful glances, foreseeing 'the dolorous day to be'. The end is near. As for Ettarre, she too was disenchanted on discovering Gawain's fraud, repented of her ill-treatment of Pelleas and yearned for him.

The Last Tournament. The atmosphere of this idyll is still gloomier. The king had found a little 'maiden babe' with a ruby necklace round her neck in an eagle's nest. This 'Nestling' was reared by Guinevere, but the poor child died of a cold. The queen wished that the necklace be the prize at a tournament, to be called the Tournament of Dead Innocence, in honour of the babe. As the king had to go to the North to punish a miscreant, the Red Knight, who had defied and abused him and all his court, he appointed Launcelot to preside over the tournament. This last tournament witnessed great fall from the high ideals of chivalry: the new Knights were cowardly, boastful, less courteous to the ladies, and less scrupu-

lous in observing the rules of fighting. Tristram wins the necklace, but instead of giving it to his wife, Iseult of Brittany, he decides to present it to his paramour, Iseult, queen of King Mark of Cornwall. (Tristram was Mark's nephew—his sister's son). As he clasps the necklace round the Queen's neck and is about to kiss her Mark strikes him dead from behind.

Arthur returning from his successful adventure is shocked to find that Guinevere has fled. His jester, Dagonet (who by the way had delivered some shrewd home-thrusts to the incestuous Tristram) falls sobbing at his feet—"I am thy fool, I shall never make thee smile again".

Guinevere. Stricken with conscience and fear of exposure Guinevere asks Launcelot to go back to his own lands. They meet for the last time, but are surprised by Modred. Launcelot overthrows him and urges the Queen to fly with him. But she decides to seek sanctuary in the convent at Almesbury 'and bide my doom'. Arthur thinking that she has fled with Launcelot pursues them overseas and besieges Launcelot's castle. Learning that Modred, his nephew, has usurped the throne and banded with the heathen and some traitors, he hurries back home and on the way visits Guinevere who prostrates herself at his feet. He denounces her sin, which has broken the Round Table and wrecked all his hopes, but forgives her, "as Eternal God forgives." Declaring he cannot help loving her still he takes leave of her. Heart-broken and repentant she stays on with the nuns, is chosen as their abbess and after three years dies.

The Passing of Arthur. In this, the last of the idylls, Tennyson has added a sort of prologue to the original *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842 in order to fit it sequentially in the scheme of the *Idylls*. Bedivere, the last surviving Knight of the Round Table, relates the last scenes of Arthur's life to the younger generation. In his march to the west to meet Modred's forces, the king was heard one night bemoaning in his tent the shattering of all his hopes. Then on the night before the battle he was visited in his dream by the ghost of Gawain who was killed fighting against Launcelot. The ghost warned the king that he would die the next day. On the morning of the battle he is distressed by the thought that he was going to fight his own people and his own knights. The battle itself was 'dim' and 'weird', fought under a 'deathwhite mist'. At the end there were three survivors, Arthur, Bedivere, and Modred. Arthur slays Modred, but is himself mortally wounded. Bedivere takes the king to a nearby chapel and the king feeling his approaching end asks Bedivere to throw his sword Excalibur into the lake. Tempted by the wonder of the sword to keep it as a relic of the king for posterity, Bedivere hides it twice among the rushes, but is found out by the report of what happened when the sword was thrown. So, sent the third time he throws away the sword which 'shot like a streamer of the northern morn' before falling and was caught by 'an arm clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful' that drew it under in the lake.

Bedivere thereafter carries the king to the margin of the lake where 'a dusky barge' filled 'with stately forms' is waiting. The king is placed in the barge and received by three queens—the same that had attended his birth. Bedivere grieved at the parting is consoled by the king—

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfills himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

He asks Bedivere to pray for him for 'More things are wrought by prayer/Than this world dreams of'.

Have the *Idylls* any moral or allegorical meaning? From the dedication to the memory of Prince Albert, it is obvious that in King Arthur Tennyson painted his ideal Knight or Victorian gentleman—

Who revered his conscience as his king,
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it;
Who loved one only and who clave to her.

The story of this blameless king was intended to be an allegory of 'Sense at war with Soul'. He is ruined by one sin, that of his queen and Launcelot. Like the ever-widening ripples, created in a pond by a stone thrown into it, the baneful influence of that sin gradually engulfs the whole order of the Round Table. The story also illustrates the tragedy of extreme idealism. In the entire community of Knights there was only one Galahad. The king expected too much of poor human nature. As Tristram says, "The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself."

To press the allegory further, such for example, that Arthur represents "religious faith," the Round Table "liberal institutions," Merlin "Science," etc. would be a complication that might well snap the patience of the average reader who is already bored with Balin and Balan, Merlin, Vivien and the rest. In fact except *Gareth and Lynette* and *Morte d'Arthur*, the *Idylls of the King* are tedious reading.

The chief criticism of the *Idylls of the King* has been that the manners and morals depicted in them are Victorian rather than medieval. Tennyson, it may be presumed, had very good reasons for softening some of the harsher aspects of medieval chivalry to make it acceptable to the Victorians, as to Queen Victoria, to the memory of whose husband the *Idylls* were dedicated. The real defect of the whole series is that not a single character in them is alive. The characters belong to a make-believe world—a world the reader traverses with a curious sense of unreality. Even the central figure, that of Arthur, is shadowy, abstract, unreal.

The English Idylls. Tennyson was more successful in his English idylls, pictures of English life presented earlier in *The 'Miller's*

Daughter, Dora, and *The Gardener's Daughter* and later in *Enoch Arden* (1864) and a large group comprising *The Brook*, *Aylmer's Field*, *Sea-Dreams*, *The Grandmother*, *The Northern Farmer* (new style), *The First Quarrel*, *The Northern Cobbler*, *The Village Wife*, *The Spinster's Sweet Arts*, *The Church Warden and the Curate*.

Enoch Arden (1864). The story of Enoch Arden, noted for its deep domestic pathos, must have endeared Tennyson to every English heart. Enoch, Philip and Annie are playmates in a small sea side village. Both of the boys love Annie, but Enoch more vocal than Philip wins the girl. After sometime poverty drives Enoch away on a sea voyage and nothing is heard of him for ten years. During all this time Philip quietly helps Annie and puts her two children to school. Thinking Enoch dead, he renews his courtship of Annie who, full of gratitude, marries him. Enoch who after a shipwreck has been living on a lonely island is rescued and returns. Having secretly witnessed the domestic happiness of Annie, Philip and his own children, he though heart-broken, decides that they shall not know of his return until after his death. On his death-bed he charges the widow Miriam Lane, keeper of the tavern, thus—

... I charge you now,
When you shall see her, tell her that I died
Blessing her, praying for her, loving her;
Save for the bar between us, loving her
As when she laid her head beside my own.
And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw
So like her mother, that my latest breath
Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.
And tell my son that I died blessing him.
And say to Philip that I blest him too;
He never meant us anything but good.

The Brook. The Brook song 'For men may come and men may go, But I go on for ever' is familiar to all, but it's a pity the lovely rustic idyll which forms its setting is not so generally known. Katie, the only daughter of Philip Willows, an old tenant-farmer, is betrothed to her cousin James Willows. Lawrence Aylmer, a friend of the family, also loves Katie and becomes the cause of James's jealousy, which leads to a quarrel between the betrothed cousins. James is anxious for reconciliation but every time he visits Katie, Philip butts in and prevents their meeting. At Katie's request Aylmer visits the garrulous Philip and wishes to be shown round the farm. The old man thus out of the way, James and Katie meet and are reconciled. After marriage they go off to Australia. Aylmer visiting the farm twenty years later (Philip is long dead) meets a maiden who turns out to be the daughter of Katie, his old love. She tells him that her parents have come back from Australia and bought the farm they had formerly tenanted, adding—

Am I so like her? so they said on board.
Sir, if you knew her in her English days,
My mother, as it seems you did, the days
That most she loves to talk of, come with me.

My brother James is in the harvest field:
But she—you will be welcome—O, come in!

Aylmer's Field. This is a vehement condemnation of the false pride of rank and wealth which, obstructing the course of true love, leads to fatal consequences. Edith the only child and heiress of Sir Aylmer, and Leolin, a young barrister, love each other. Sir Aylmer thinking such a match unworthy of his great ancient family, heaps outrageous abuses on Leolin and forbids him the house. Edith's movements are restrained and spies set on her. The correspondence of the young lovers is intercepted and rich heirs from all around the country are encouraged to court Edith. She rejects them all, but twenty months' separation from Leolin proves too much for her and she dies. Hearing of this Leolin commits suicide. Their hopes ruined, the baronet and his wife also pass away. How strongly Tennyson felt the tyranny of wealth may be gauged from the following speech of Leolin—

He believed

This filthy marriage-hindering Mammon made
The harlot of the cities: nature crost
Was mother of the foul adulteries
That saturate soul with body.

These old pheasant-lords,
These partridge breeders of a thousand years,
Who had mildew'd in their thousands, doing nothing.

Sea-Dreams. The theme of this little tale is forgiveness. A city clerk of gentle birth and breeding is on a month's holiday together with his wife and three-year old daughter. Though they are on a sea coast away from din and smoke of London, the clerk has no peace of mind, for anger burns in his heart against an oily-tongued cheat who had robbed him of all his savings by persuading him to buy shares in a non-existent Peruvian mine. When they hear that the cheat has died of a heart-attack, the wife pleads with the husband to forgive his enemy now that he is dead. Relenting he says 'I do forgive him', and they slept soundly.

The Grandmother. This is a pathetic picture of a very old woman who has lost all her children. She tells her granddaughter Annie how all her children are still about her, her little daughter (also an Annie) who died at two, 'pattering over the boards', and the boys (Harry and Charlie) sitting by her chair or 'hovering about' her bed. She cannot weep for Willy, her eldest son, just dead, for 'he has but gone for an hour', and 'I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to be vexed?' This poem has given us a famous quotation: 'A lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies'.

The Northern Farmer (Old Style), and The Northern Farmer (New Style). These are dialect poems and illustrate rustic humour. Tennyson tells us that each portrait was built up from a single sentence. About the first it is said that on his death-bed the old man, about eighty, cried out, "God A'mighty little knows what

He's about a taking me. An Squire will be so mad an all." The poet filled in the other details like the old man's insistence on his poor opinion of all doctors, etc. The second portrait was suggested by a rich farmer who used to say, "When I canters my 'erse (horse) along the ramper (highway) I 'ears proputtty, proputtty, proputtty." This wordly-wise worthy warns his son against love marriage, and counsels him to marry a girl with property.

The First Quarrel. This is a tragic tale of female jealousy. Ellen accidentally comes upon a woman's love letter to her husband Harry and quarrels with him. He assures her that this was an affair of his single life and that he has been faithful to her ever since their marriage, but to no purpose. As he can't find any work on the Isle of Wight (where they live), Harry decides to cross over to Jersey where he has been promised six weeks' work. Ellen refuses to kiss him good-bye. His boat goes down in a storm and Ellen heart broken, repents.

The Northern Cobbler. This is a dialect poem, full of humour. The cobbler tells his brother-in-law (wife's brother) how in a fit of drunkenness he had kicked and lamed his wife Sally, how he was ashamed of this act, and how he had resolved to abjure drink. He bought a big black bottle of gin and put it in the window so that he might 'look my hennemy strait i' the faice'. It was going to stand there till his dying day. But why a quart bottle when a pint would have served quite as well? His reason—

Now doubt:

But I liked a bigger feller to fight wi' an'
fowt it out.
Fine an' meller (mellower) 'e mun (must) be by
this, if I cared to taaste,
But I moant (must not), my lad, and I
weant (won't), fur I'd feal mysen (myself)
clean disgraced.

The Village Wife. This is a dialect poem containing interesting pictures of the inmates of a manorial Hall. The new Squire has just come into possession, and the housekeeper has sent a girl for butter and eggs to the Village Wife who has supplied these articles for over twenty years. The old woman entertains the maidservant with cowslip wine and her reminiscences of the Hall. The old Squire was a happy-go-lucky man, generous and warm-hearted with a passion for books, works of art, and antiquities. Taking no interest in the land and spending lavishly on his hobbies he had incurred a huge debt. The property being entailed in favour of his son Charlie, the old man could not pay his debts unless Charlie surrendered the entail. The young man refused to oblige and suggested that his father sell his books. The books, however, fetched him next to nothing, inasmuch as his daughters had torn out leaves in the middle to kindle the fire. Thereafter, Charlie fell from his horse and died. "Sa (So) 'is taail wur lost an 'is boooks wur gone an' 'is boy wur dead." Thus ruined and friendless the Squire followed his son

into the grave. Because of the entail the daughter inherited nothing and came to no good end.

The interest of the poem lies in the unconscious humour of the village wife's comments on the Squire and his family. The old Squire was 'a Varsity scholard' always with a book in his hand, and 'We haates boooklarninere'. He was a great snuff-taker "An' 'is noase so grufted wi' snuff es it couldn't be scroobed away. As to Charlie—'e were that outdacious at 'oam,/Not thaw (though) ya went fu to raake out Hell wi' a small-tooth coamb."

Though the old woman liked all the girls except the eldest, who like her mother was stuck up, her remarks about them are not very complimentary. Lucy was 'laame o' one leg, sweet 'arts she niver 'ed none'; Jenny's head was 'as bald as one o'them heggs'; Nelly was 'as big i' the mouth as a cow'; and as for Annie, the eldest, who had insulted her in public—"I knows that mooch (much) o' shea, es it beant not fit to be tow'd (told)!"

The Spinster's Sweet-Arts. For its quiet, realistic humour this idyll is second only to *The Northern Farmer* (old style). The Spinster's sweethearts are four tabby cats whom she has named after her former suitors: Roby, Steevie, Tommy the first, and Tommy the second. While waiting for their milk to arrive, she talks to them about how she had rejected their namesakes who had courted her not for her own sake (for she was no beauty) but for her two hundred pounds a year. She had loved Roby best, but she rejected him because he had dirtied her brand new carpet with his muddy shoes, "An' Molly an' me was agreed as we was a cleanin' the floor

That a man be a durty thing an' a trouble an'
blague wi' indoor."

She had rejected Steevie, her next best, because he had already two children—"a bouncin' boy an' a gell"—and she could not bear children with all their din and dirt, mischief and awkward questions. At this point the two Tommies start fighting and she has to get up and separate them. She is horrified at the thought of being wife to such ill-tempered Tommies—

Theere! I ha' master'd *them*! Hed I
married the Tommies—O Lord,
To loove an' obaay the Tommies! I couldn't
'a stuck by my word.

To be horder'd about, an' waaked, when
Molly'd put out the light,
By a man coomin' in we' a hiccup
at ony nour o' the night!
An' the taablo staain'd wi' 'is aale, an'
the mud o' 'is boots o' the stairs,
An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse, an'
the mark o' 'is ead o' the chairs!
An' noan O 'my four sweet-arts' ud 'a
Let me 'a hed my oan waay,

Sa I likes 'em best wi' taails when thy
'evn't a word to saay.

The Church Warden and the Curate. Another dialect poem in which the worldly-wise Church-warden tells the fresh, newly appointed curate the secret of success in life. If the curate wants to rise in the church, he must control his tongue. He may preach against the sins of the world, but never against the faults of the Squire—

But niver not speak plaain out, if tha wants
to git forrards a bit,
But creeap a long the hedge-bottoms, an' thou'll
be a Bishop yit.

Political & Patriotic Poems. Among Tennyson's later political or patriotic poems those deserving brief notices are: *Ode on the death of the Duke of Wellington*, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, *The Revenge and Locksley Hall Sixty years After*. The *Ode* (1852) was almost universally attacked, for the Duke had become unpopular because of his opposition to reforms. The sincerity of Tennyson's tribute, however, cannot be questioned. The famous *Charge of the Light Brigade* celebrates heroism of the six hundred and odd officers and men of the Light Cavalry under Lord Cardigan that charged the Russian Army of more than ten thousand at Balaclava in the Crimean War (26 September, 1854). The Russians had placed their cannon in front, and nearly half of the brigade was killed or wounded. The charge was a blunder due to misunderstanding of Lord Raglan's orders—

'Forward, the Light Brigadel'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd.
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die;
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

The Revenge. This well known ballad celebrates the reckless courage of Sir Richard Grenville, the English admiral of the 16th century. His ship *The Revenge* was separated from the fleet off Flores, but he fought Spanish ships until mortally wound'd. This exploit of his struck terror into the hearts of the Spaniards.

Locksley Hall sixty years after. This, the counter-part of the first *Locksley Hall*, is a strong protest against the *ultra* radicalism of the later Victorian era—against the pernicious doctrine that "only those who cannot read can rule." This rubbish known in the communistic jargon as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat,' is itself founded on the false theory that all are equal preached by lying politicians—

Equal-born? O Yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no bigger than the Cat.

The protest is not only against radical politics, but against the general degradation of life in all spheres—religious, economic, social and cultural. Religion has become a mockery—

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest of the great;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin of heathen hate.

What have Science and Progress done to improve the social and economic condition of the masses?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?
There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.
There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead
There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

The picture of the literary field is equally lurid, naked obscenity in the name of art—

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhymester, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of Art.
Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul passion bare;
Down with Reticence, Down with Reverence—forward—naked—let them
stare.
Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage of your sewer;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream should issue pure.
Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too into the abysm.

And how has Science influenced the style of buildings, their architecture?

Yonder lies our young sea village—Art and Grace are less and less.
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideousness!

But what about the high sounding Evolution, which is supposed to mean going up and up? Has it lost its way or turned back upon itself?

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evoluton in the mud.

The poet is provoked to scorn and satire by this allround deterioration. He realizes that progress had not proceeded along the lines he had anticipated in his youth. This poem is one of disenchantment, depression, and despondency, but not of despair. For the poet has not abandoned the ideals of youth voiced in the first *Locksley Hall*. The bright goal of human brotherhood and Parliament of Man is still there—only a little farther away.

Earth at last a warless World, a single race, a single tongue—
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?

The poet's political outlook was consistently the same throughout his life.

Religious Poems. Of Tennyson's later religious poems those that deserve close reading are *The Ancient Sage*, *Akbar's Dream* and *The Dreamer*.

In *The Ancient Sage*, a city wearied old man answers the questions of a young materialist. This libertine has lost his beloved—'lily and rose in one'—and with her all his hope and faith. The sage can neither prove nor disprove God and Immortality, for 'Nothing worthy proving can be proven; nor yet disproven.' His advice is—

Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of faith!
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men
And more—think well! Do-well follow thought.

Akbar's Dream. The dream itself forms the concluding portion of the poem. The rest of it is Akbar's talk to Abdul Fazl, his intimate friend and chief minister. It was with his aid that Akbar successfully solved the problem of ruling over an empire of mixed subjects. Akbar's system of toleration of all religions was not mere policy; he sincerely believed that all religions are different roads to one and the same God. In the words of Tennyson, "he invented a new eclectic religion by which he hoped to unite all creeds, castes and people." This was called Divine Faith (*Deen-e-Ilahi*). According to this faith God is in every temple, church or mosque and He is praised in every language. Those who love God have no concern with orthodoxy or heresy—

Heresy to the heretic, and religion to the orthodoxy
But the dust of the rose petal belongs to the
heart of the perfume seller.

The perfume, the essence, of religion is love—

And was not Alla call'd
In old Iran the Sun of Love? and love
The net of Truth?

And if Alla is the Sun of Love—

May not Kings
Express Him also by their warmth of love
For all they rule—by equal law for all?
By deeds a light to men?

"By deeds"—that is the operative part—

To pray, to do according to the prayer,
 Are, both, to worship Alla, but the prayers,
 That have no successor in deed, are faint
 And pale in Alla's eyes, fair mothers they
 Dying in childbirth of dead sons.

The emperor's liberalism was opposed by the Ulama "who sitting on green sofas contemplate the torments of the damned already"; but he thought it unking-like to force the non-Moslems to embrace Islam—

I stagger at the Koran and the sword,
 I shudder at the Christian and the stake.

He felt it to be his mission to spread the Divine Faith—

And alchemise old hates into the gold-
 Of Love, and make it current; and beat back
 The menacing poison of intolerant priests.

But the emperor is disturbed by a dream he had the day before. In that dream while he and Abdul Fazl were rejoicing at the sacred temple of Divine Faith with its doors open to all, Saleem rushed in and with a mocking laugh "the new Koran!" slew the counsellor first and then overcame the king. 'But Death had ears and eyes,' and the king watched Saleem and his followers pull down the fair edifice stone from stone; 'and from the ruin arose the shriek and curse of trampled millions, even as in the time before.' Then while the king was still groaning, came out of the west an alien race (the British)—

Who fitted stone to stone again, and Truth,
 Peace, Love and Justice came and dwelt there in,
 and in sleep I said
 "All praise to Alla by whatever hands
 My mission be accomplish'd!"

The poem should be read along with Tennyson's 'Notes' appended to it.

The Dreamer (1892). This was the last poem written by Tennyson evidently in anticipation of his death. On a night in midwinter, through the head of the Dreamer rang the words of the Scripture: 'The meek shall inherit the earth!' Just then he heard the wailing cry of the Earth complaining that in spite of all her efforts to usher in the golden age, the age of iron has triumphed—

For teeming with liars, and madmen, and knaves
 And wearied of Autocrats, Anarchs, and Slaves,
 And darken'd with doubts of a Faith that saves,
 And crimson with battles, and hollow with graves,
 To the wail of my winds, and the moan of my waves
 I whirl, and follow the Sun.

This wail the Dreamer answered with a song with the optimistic

refrain of "All's well that ends well." The meek have certainly not inherited the earth as yet, but they *will* before her 'race be run.' The poem sums up Tennyson's faith.

The Greek Poems. Tennyson wrote seven poems on Greek themes: *Oenone*, *The Lotos Eaters*, *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, *Tiresias*, *Demeter*, *Persephone* and *The Death of Oenone*. The first four have already been noticed. The remaining three are summarised below.

Tiresias. Tiresias was a soothsayer of Thebes, capital of Boetia in Greece. He was struck blind for having seen Athene bathing, but was compensated by a gift of prophecy which wouldn't be believed—

Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
And speak the truth that no man may believe.

Since the paradoxical nature of the 'gift' has made him impotent to do any good to his city, he asks his young son (who has 'never known the embrace of love') to sacrifice his 'maiden life' (by killing himself with his own hand) and save Thebes from destruction. Cadmus, the founder of Thebes had incurred the wrath of the god Aries who has told Tiresias that Thebes shall perish unless one of the descendants of Cadmus sacrifices himself. Tiresias exhorts his son with these words—

My son,
No sound is breathed so potent to coerce
And to conciliate, as their names who dare
For that sweet motherland which gave them birth
Nobly to do, nobly to die.

The son departs to carry out the act.

For a fuller background of the poem the student should read the story of Thebes in a classical dictionary.

Demeter and Persephone. Persephone (Roman Proserpine) was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter (Roman Ceres) the goddess of Earth or agriculture. While gathering flowers in the valley of Enna in Sicily, she was carried off by Pluto, lord of Hades or the Lower world, and made his queen. Demeter, heart-broken, wanders over the whole earth in search of her until Zeus moved to pity by her grief grants that Persephone shall live nine months with her mother and three months with Pluto. Dazed by her stay in Hades with the dead she is brought by Demeter to the very spot in Enna whence she had been spirited away in order that she may recover her memory. Demeter tells Persephone of her wanderings and her bitter hatred of the gods.

The poem celebrates "the deathless heart of motherhood." The most moving passage in it is that in which Demeter describes her yearning for her daughter—

Child, when thou wert gone,
I envied human wives, and nested birds,

Yea, the cubb'd lioness; went in search of thee
 Thro' many a palace, many a cot, and gave
 Thy breast to ailing infants in the night,
 And set the mother waking in amaze
 To find her sick one whole; and forth again
 Among the wail of midnight winds, and cried,
 'Where is my loved one? Wherefore do ye wail.'
 And out from all the night an answer shrill'd.
 'We know not, and we know not why we wail.'

Tennyson has made a slight alteration in the old myth according to which Persephone was allowed six months with her mother and six months with her husband. The myth symbolises the sowing of the seed under ground (lower world) and the growing of the corn (upper world).

The Death of Oenone. Oenone, wan and desolate, was sitting at the mouth of her cave on Mt. Ida and musing on her past happiness with Paris when suddenly, following a shrill cry sounding 'Oenone,' he stood before her 'lame, crooked, reeling, livid.' He had been pierced by a poisoned arrow in the fight (in the Trojan war) and begged her to save his life with some herb or balm, for she was known far and wide for her healing powers. She refused saying, 'Go back to thy adulteress and die! Paris fell dead and his body rolled down to the bottom of the cliff. The shepherds, his old playmates, forgetting the crime of the man 'whose crime half unpeopled Ilion' built a funeral pile and kindled it.

Oenone falling into a momentary sleep dreamt that Paris was calling to her 'Come to me, Oenone! I can wrong thee now no more!' Descrying in the evening dusk a light burning on the plain she hurried down to the spot and learning that the body on the pyre was that of Paris, she muffled up 'her comely head' and crying—

Husband! she leapt upon the funeral pile
 And mixt herself with *him* and past in fire.

Crossing the Bar. Written a year or so before the poet's death, this fine Epitaph came to him in a flash. It is a memorable witness of his confident faith. He would have no 'moaning of the bar', 'no sadness of farewell', when he embarks upon his final journey. He hopes 'to see my Pilot face to face'.

Criticism

Tennyson's fame as a poet rests principally on the volumes of 1842. The first volume contained chiefly old poems revised and improved, while the second consisted of pieces almost all new. Even the earlier poems, though harshly yet not unjustly criticised, were sufficient to show that a successor to Keats had arrived. But Tennyson though romantic was romantic with a difference. Joined to the romantic temperament was a classical sense of form which made him see the over-luxuriance of his earlier poems. So subjecting him-

self to rigorous artistic discipline he cut out all redundancies, affectations and mannerisms from those poems. The result justified this procedure. The poems of 1842, both the revised and the new, revealed his gift of pictorial and musical expression kept within limits by self-restraint. He refined and polished each poem to the utmost perfection of which he was capable. Thus, his work was an improvement upon that of the Romantics of the preceding era, in respect of form. In the first flush of reaction against the 18th century, they were often led by their romantic enthusiasm to excess and extravagance. Much of Wordsworth's poetry, for example, was spoiled by his theory of poetic diction; Shelley was lost in the gorgeous obscurities of his own erratic imagination; and Byron was notoriously indifferent to form and finish; Tennyson avoided these errors by his single-minded devotion to artistic perfection. And it is as a consummate poetic artist that he takes his place among the great poets of England.

While artistic beauty is the chief aspect of Tennyson's poetry, there is another and perhaps higher aspect of his poetry which had wider appeal in his day and which has not altogether lost its force in our own. This is the philosophic aspect. Though Tennyson did not, like Wordsworth, affirm this in so many words, he did regard himself as a teacher. So far he had devoted himself mostly to the creation of beauty for its own sake and had only casually strayed into the field of thought (*The Two Voices*, *St. Simeon*, *Stylites*, *Ulysses*, *Locksley Hall*). Like every great poet he too had a sense of mission—a mission to enlighten, to edify, to elevate. Being the chief poet of his day, he had come to be looked upon as a prophet, a sage, by that large majority of ordinary Englishmen who were incapable of appreciating artistic beauty. They looked up to him for guidance. Tennyson fulfilled this higher purpose by giving poetic expression to his views on religious, political and social problems that were agitating Victorian England.

In his youth Tennyson like most men of his day gloried in the greatness of England. He saw immense possibilities for good in democracy and science, so much so that he saw a vision of "the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world" (*Locksley Hall*). But this mood of optimism did not last long. Soon came the reaction; doubts and perplexities arose in every field, especially in religion and politics. Evolution and socialism seemed to threaten the very foundations of society. The growing materialism of the age posed another danger. Progress had taken a wrong turning. At such a time Tennyson exerted a wholesome influence on his age by giving his countrymen counsels of sanity and wisdom and by cautioning them against the folly of extremes. Science, he taught, is not negation of religion, nor democracy rule by the brainless. He welcomed progress but not at the cost of the best traditions of charity, reverence, and chivalry. Finally, religion, he maintained, is not creed but love of fellow-men.

Tennyson's teaching, implicit in almost all his later work, is more

explicitly stated in four longer poems: *The Princess* (1847), *In Memoriam* (1850), *Maud* (1855), *The Idylls of the King* (1859-85). *The Princess* deals with the question of women's rights, their higher education, etc; *In Memoriam* and *The Idylls of the King* contain an exposition of Tennyson's religious faith; and *Maud* contains a criticism of materialism.

These longer poems, with the exception of the *Princess* have never been popular. They are wordy and tedious and produce the impression of padding. Tennyson, it would appear, lacked the skill to design on a larger scale. Besides, he was a poor narrator. *In Memoriam*, as we have seen, is not one poem but a series of short poems; it is rambling, repetitive and vague. He had planned to write an epic of king Arthur, but after the magnificent fragment of *Morte d'Arthur* he lapsed into the easier frame of the idyll. And except for *Gareth and Lynette* and *Launcelot and Elaine*, *The Idylls of the King* are dull reading. *Maud*, though remarkable for the variety of metrical effect, is, as a story, too unbalanced and melodramatic ever to have much appeal. It lives by one or two songs. *The Princess* alone has the necessary ingredients of popular appeal: a romantic story (nobody minds its length), beautiful songs, humour, pathos, drama, sound philosophy. Some critics have dismissed it as outdated on the ground that the issue of women's higher education is no longer a living one. It is not so. *The Princess* treats the problem of women's rights in its universal and not merely local aspect, and as such it has enduring interest. In spite of the advance made in the twentieth century, it is idle to pretend that the larger question of man vs. woman has been satisfactorily solved.

Tennyson's genius was essentially lyrical and he excels, therefore, in shorter pieces like those of 1842. The same excellence is shown in the shorter pieces of his later period: *Enoch Arden* and the poems grouped round it which have been happily called the 'Idylls of the Heartl.'—little pictures of English life remarkable for domestic pathos or rustic humour. In these the poet shows a deep understanding of ordinary men and women of the countryside among whom he had lived in Lincolnshire and the Isle of Wight. Tennyson, the laureate of kings, queens and knights was no less a laureate of the common people—farmers, field labourers and cobblers—

Plowmen, shepherds have I found and more than
once, and still could find,
Sons of God and Kings of men in utter
nobleness of mind.

(*Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*)

It is fashionable to charge Tennyson with complacency. His second *Locksley Hall* written at the age of eighty and *The Dreamer* at eighty-two are conclusive rebuttals of the charge. The man who could write of the Earth as "teeming with liars, and madmen and knaves, and wearied of Autocrats, Anarchs, and slaves" etc., was certainly not complacent. Despite the prevalence of evil in his age, however,

he had enough faith in God and humanity to look forward to a brighter future.

Another defect pointed out by his critics is his shallowness. It is true Tennyson did not strike deep in any field. But because he is not subtle or profound, it does not follow that he is commonplace. His voice may not be as divinely tuned as Wordsworth's or Shelley's but it still is the voice of a seer who has experienced the Divine in the depths of his heart, the voice, moreover, which speaks to us in language we understand and in illustrations which come home to our bosoms. Finally, the large number of quotations from Tennyson current in daily speech and writing are proof enough that the world outside the critics does not regard him as shallow.

Tennyson's style is as perfect as he could make it within the limits of his genius. His language is simple, yet choice, and his versification modulated to every theme, mood, feeling, or atmosphere he sought to convey. Whether it is blank verse or rhymed stanza there is always perfect harmony between form and matter. It is as evident in the epic majesty of *Morte d'Arthur* as in the homely grace of *The Gardener's Daughter*; in the luxurious languor of *The Lotos-Eaters* as in the desolation of *Mariana*. Examples need not be multiplied. Everywhere in Tennyson the beauty of thought or feeling is inseparable from the beauty of the utterance. Sound echoes the sense.

Tennyson's descriptions of Nature are marked by close, almost scientific observation, with minute, precise details. He uses Nature to evoke moods of joy or sorrow. In *Mariana* or *The Death of Oenone*, for example, the pictures of Nature suggest decay and desolation in the hearts of the torlorn women pining for their lovers. Here is the picture of Mariana's farm-house—

With blackest moss the flower-pots
Were thickly crusted, one and all;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Uplifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange
She only said, My life is dreary,
He cometh not; she said:
She said 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

Similarly in the *Death of Oenone*—

Oenone sat within the cave from out
Whose ivy-matted mouth she used to gaze
Down at the Troad; but the goodly view
Was now one blank, and all the serpent vines
Which on the touch of heavenly feet had risen
And gliding through the branches over-bower'd
The naked Three, were wither'd long ago,

And thro' the sunless winter morning-mist
In silence wept upon the flowerless earth.

Contrasted with these gloomy pictures are the joyous ones of 'Come into the garden, Maud' or of *The Daisy* reflecting the raptures of the lovers—

Come into the garden, Maud.
There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion flower at the gate.
She is coming my dove, my dear;
She is coming my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, 'She is near, She is near';
And the white rose weeps, 'She is late';
The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear';
And the lily whispers, 'I wait'.

In *The Daisy* the poet recalls the happy memories of his Italian visit with his wife. The immediate cause of the reminiscence was finding a daisy in the book his wife had lent him—

O Love, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine;
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

Such joyous moods, however, are few and far between in Tennyson. He had in him a melancholy strain and the dominant note of his poetry is elegiac. This is accentuated by his 'passion for the past'. He is associated in popular mind with poems and songs like 'Break, Break, Break' and 'Tears, idle tears', with their yearning for 'the days that are no more'. His distinctive excellence is in depicting scenes of pathos.

To sum up, in any final estimate of Tennyson, we must regard him not only as a great poetic artist but also as an influential sage and spokesman of the Victorian era. The characteristic form of his poetry is the Idyll and its characteristic matter faith.

A few popular quotations from his poems follow.

'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.
O yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill.
But what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light
And with no language but a cry.
So careful of the type she seems
So careless of the single life.
There lives more faith in honest doubt
Believe me, than in half the creeds.
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

(In Memoriam)
(The Brook)

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers.

The Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

(*Locksley Hall*)

A lie that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies.

(*The Grandmother*)

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,

And God fulfils himself in many ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control

(*Morte d' Arthur*)

These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

(*Oenone*)

BROWNING

Robert Browning (1812-89). His father was a clerk in the bank of England; his mother, of Scottish and German origin, was a staunch dissenter. He was educated in private schools and at home. At 18, he made his choice of profession—that of a poet. Coming under the influence of Shelley he privately published *Pauline* (1833), a short poem which has a strong Shelleyean flavour. This was followed by *Paracelsus* (1835), a dramatic poem, based on the life of the Swiss physician (16th century). His play *Strafford* was produced by Macready, the actor, in 1837. In 1840 appeared *Sordello* which became a by-word for unintelligibility. From 1841 to 1846 appeared a series of poems whimsically styled *Bells and Pomegranates*, consisting of plays, dramatic monologues and lyrics. In 1846, he married Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, and went to Italy where he remained until her death in 1861. During these years he produced *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* (1850) and *Men and Women* (1855). After his wife's death he returned to London and settled there. In 1864, he published *Dramatis Personae* and in 1868-69 *The Ring and the Book*. During the remaining twenty years of his life he poured out a large number of books the latest of which *Asolando* was published on the day of his death (December 12, 1889). He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Works

Short notices of his works follow.

Pauline. Anonymously printed when Browning was twenty, the poem is an obscure confession of the poet's admiration for a poet who can only be surmised to be Shelley. *Pauline* to whom the poet confides his sentiments is equally indistinct and shadowy.

Paracelsus. This Swiss physician, who sought perfect knowledge and the secret of the universe, is shown to have failed in his quest because he lacked love and sympathy.

Plays. Two of Browning's plays, *Strafford* and *A Blot on the Scutcheon* (both tragedies) were produced at Covent Garden but were failures. The first is historical. The Earl of Strafford, who had fought for Charles I against Parliament, was executed in 1641. The second is a romantic tragedy. A noble lady gets intimate with her lover, a

young lord, before marriage. Her brother surprises them in the lady's chamber and kills the lover. The lady dies of a broken heart and the brother stricken with remorse commits suicide by taking poison. The events relate to the 18th century.

Sordello. The poem is built round the life of a little known Italian poet of the 12th century. The background of the story is the factional struggle in medieval Italy between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, two parties supporting respectively the Popes and the Emperors. The noble-born Sordello's mother dies immediately after his birth. In the confusion of a faction fight a lady passes him off as the son of an archer and brings him up as her page. He grows up to be an idealistic, unworldly poet. His real identity is discovered and wealth, power, and position are within his reach. He is torn between the higher poetic ideal and the lower worldly one, and in the struggle dies.

Sordello is the most difficult of Browning's poems and its obscurity is proverbial. Tennyson, it is said, could not say whether Sordello was a man, beast, or bird. Browning himself when asked the meaning of a line in the poem is reported to have said, that when he wrote that line two persons knew what it meant—God and Robert Browning: but now God only knew.

Bells and Pomegranates. The series of poems under this title includes: *Pippa Passes*, *The Pied Piper*, *How they brought the good news from Ghent*, *The Lost Leader*, *The Lost Mistress*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, *Home Thoughts from the Sea*, *Evelyn Hope*, *Incident of the French Camp*, *My Last Duchess*.

Pippa Passes. Pippa, a poor girl who works in a silk mill, goes out singing through the Italian town of Asolo on the morning of her one holiday in the whole year. Her cheerful songs fall on the ears of four different groups of people at the most critical moments of their lives.

In the first group Ottima and her lover Sebald have murdered Ottima's husband. Pippa's song fills them with remorse.

In the second group the French sculptor Jules, disgusted with his newly married wife Phene is thinking to get rid of her. Pippa's song stirs in him better feelings and he gives up his purpose.

In the third group Luigi, a patriot, has resolved to kill the Austrian emperor. Pippa's song causes him to run away, thus escaping arrest.

In the fourth group the Bishop is planning with his manager to kill Pippa herself, she being the daughter of the Bishop's murdered brother whose estate he has appropriated. Pippa's song touches his conscience and turns him from his purpose.

Pippa returns home at sunset and goes to bed singing, all unconscious of the good she has done.

Pippa's song which the first group hears is the one often quoted as evidence of Browning's optimism—

The year's at the spring
 And day's at the morn;
 Morning's at seven;
 The hillside's dew-pearled;
 The lark's on the wing;
 The snail's on the thorn;
 God's in his heaven—
 All's right with the world.

The poem, however, is by no means easy.

The Pied Piper of Hamelin, A Child's Story. The town of Hamelin in Germany was infested with rats. The havoc they made may be guessed from the following stanza—

Rats!
 They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats
 And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chats
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

In desperation the townsfolk demonstrated before the Town Hall and threatened to dismiss the Mayor and the Councillors if they didn't do something to rid the town of its rats.

At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

As the Mayor and Councillors sat deliberating there appeared before them a tall thin man wearing a 'queer long coat from heel to head' half yellow and half red. He undertook to drive away the vermin by means of a secret charm on payment of a thousand guilders. On the Corporation's promising to pay the required sum, the Pied Piper stepped into the street and began playing upon his magic pipe. Hearing the shrill notes of the pipe the rats came tumbling out of the houses and followed the Piper as he moved along the street and then down to the river Wesser where they were drowned. When the Piper returned to claim the reward the Mayor and Corporation refused, offering him only fifty guilders. Thereupon the Piper again began playing upon his pipe and all the children ran out and followed him up a hillside where 'a Wondrous portal opened wide'; the piper and children entered and the door shut fast. The last portion of the poem indicates that the imprisoned children emerged in Transylvania, for its inhabitants have outlandish ways and dress which point to their German origin. The story is based on an old legend and was written for the son of William Macready, the famous actor through whose courtesy Browning's plays *Strafford*

and *A Blot on the Scutcheon* were produced on the stage. The moral of the poem, given at the end, is that we should always honour our promise.

How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix. The popularity of the poem is due to the vividness and excitement of the narrative, which relates the spirited gallop of the three horsemen. Browning's date seems a deliberate attempt at mystification and one is left guessing what the good news was. It may have something to do with the relief of Ghent from the Spanish garrison that held it. Browning had passed through the Netherlands on his journey to Russia in 1834 and was vaguely familiar with the route taken by the riders. The anapaestic measure (˘˘—) with frequent substitutions of one accented for two unaccented syllables (— —) is well suited to the sound of clatter of horses' hoofs.

Christmas Eve and Easter Day. These are two separate poems under one title. The first is a vindication of the dissenting faith of the poet's mother. In a vision the narrator is first taken to a dissenting chapel, then to St. Peter's at Rome (Roman Catholic), then to the lecture-room of a German Professor who investigates the origin of Christianity, and finally back to the dissenting chapel. He declares that the dissenter's faith is the best inasmuch as it brings him nearest to God.

In the second poem a dispute between a Christian and a Sceptic ends with a vindication of Christianity in general.

Men and Women. This includes (1) *A Grammarian's Funeral*, (2) *The Statue and the Bust*, (3) *Fra Lippo Lippi*, (4) *Andrea del Sarto*, (5) *The Bishop Orders his tomb at St. Praxed's*, (6) *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, and (7) *The Last Ride Together*.

Fra Lippo Lippi is a dramatic monologue. Fra Lippo Lippi was a 15th century Italian painter of Florence. Living in the palace of Cosmo Medici, his patron, he has furtively left at night to visit 'sportive ladies who leave their doors ajar.' Returning to the palace after midnight he is caught by night watchmen and tells his story to the captain of the watch. The story is in the main true. A starving orphan on the streets, he was taken to a Carmelite Convent where his artistic talents were employed to decorate churches, convents, etc. He was fond of sensual pleasures and delighted in realistic painting. Piety, according to him, was irrelevant to art. He did not believe in ideal beauty either, being convinced that the world is beautiful as it is. Under the influence of the Prior, however, he started painting pious subjects, the Virgin and saints etc. Of these, he speaks rather irreverently. Browning represents him as an irrepressible jester.

The Lost Leader. A popular poem in which Browning deploras Wordsworth's political apostasy. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey (the Lake Poets) had given up their youthful sympathies with the French Revolution and had become staunch conservatives. Browning generally shared liberal sentiments. Wordsworth had accepted the poet-laureateship and a pension from the Government. It is not clear in what sense Shakespeare was a democrat or republican.

Lost Mistress. The lover has lost his mistress who, however, accepts him as a friend. The lover takes this fall from love to mere friendship sportingly and will not break his heart. The loss of a mistress is not the end of the world.

Home Thoughts from Abroad, Home Thoughts from the Sea. Two patriotic poems, the first cherishing memories of the English countryside in the spring. the second those of English bravery at Trafalgar and Gibraltar.

Evelyn Hope. A middle aged man silently loves Evelyn Hope, a dying girl of sixteen. He is confident that his passion, though hopeless in this life, will be rewarded in some future state. He puts in her hand a leaf as a keepsake by which she will remember him and understand. He has firm faith that 'God above is great to grant. . .and creates the love to reward the love'.

Incident of the French Camp. A true incident which took place in 1809 when Napoleon was storming Ratisbon, a Bavarian city. A rider, a mere boy, came galloping to where Napoleon was standing and delivered the glad news that Ratisbon had been taken. Noticing that the boy had been shot in the breast, Napoleon said, "You're wounded!" "His soldier's pride touched to the quick," the boy replied "Nay, I'm killed, Sire!" And smiling he fell dead by Napoleon's side.

My Last Duchess. The Italian town of Ferrara was famous for its cultured court in the Renaissance. The Duke of Ferrara is speaking to the ambassador of a foreign Count whose daughter he proposes to marry. He is describing his last duchess whose portrait is hanging in the room. The duchess was beautiful, gay, and gracious. What offended him, however, was that she was gay and gracious to all, making no distinction between him who had bestowed upon her his 900 year old name and others. He resented such presumption and forbade her smiles: "I gave commands: Then all smiles stopped altogether." The Duke unconsciously betrays his stupid egoism. Believing in the divine right of husbands, he treated his wife as goods and chattel—a slave. The poem also shows the Renaissance man's pride of possessing works of art.

Andrea del Sarto is perhaps the most brilliant of Browning's dramatic monologues. Andrea del Sarto (1486-1531, del Sarto=son of a tailor), another Florentine painter, was called the 'Faultless Painter'. Though technically flawless, his paintings never reached the level of such painters as Raphael or Michelangelo, for he lacked the fire of inspiration. In this monologue he bewails his lot to Lucrezia, his corrupt and shallow-minded wife, with whom he was infatuated. He had aspirations and knew the value of a high ideal—

A: but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for?

But he lacked the will to achieve it. His passionless, listless, temperament was responsible not only for his artistic failure but also for his

moral degradation. He had neglected his parents and had been false to his patron Francis I, the French King. (He had misappropriated the money entrusted to him to buy works of art for the king.) But like a weak fatalist he is resigned: 'All is as God over-rules'. He consoles himself with the thought that perhaps in the New Jerusalem there will be four walls to be painted, by Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo and himself.

The Last Ride Together. Since his love has been rejected, the lover requests one more ride (the last) together. The request is granted and he exults in spiritual satisfaction, for "who knows but the world may end tonight"—"the instant made eternity". He contrasts his failure with the failures of statesmen, soldiers, poets and sculptors. He at least has the partial fulfilment which is denied to them. Compare *Lost Mistress*.

A Grammarian's Funeral. A well-known poem illustrating the Renaissance enthusiasm for Greek learning. It gives two views of a man's accomplishment, depending on whether we believe in a life beyond death or in a life that ends here like that of dogs and apes. The Grammarian believing that "Man has forever" sacrificed his health and beauty in elucidating the niceties of Greek syntax and is honoured with a grave on the mountain top. He may not have achieved perfection, but his life symbolises unrelaxing effort after a high goal. Such a life is contrasted with that of a man who sets himself a low aim and achieves it—

That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit.
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.

The idea is echoed in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. The average reader cannot help feeling that though the Grammarian is praised for his boundless ambition, Browning seems to be laughing at him also for denying himself all that this life has to give.

The grammarian is supposed to refer to a German physician of the 16th century.

The Statue and the Bust. In a square of Florence there is still an equestrian statue of Grand Duke Ferdinand, with his head turned in the direction of the Riccardi palace whose front had formerly a Bust—that of the Riccardi bride, the Duke's beloved. Her husband had kept her a close prisoner in the palace, but she could watch the Duke ride past. The two effigies are memorials of their disappointed love. The lovers were two Hamlets, who frittered away their energies in scheming and planning but lacked the spirit and resolution to act. Though the Duke was a married man and the lovers' enterprise was, therefore, a criminal one, Browning condemns them for their cowardice and inaction. Whether the aim was good or bad made no difference to the fact that they failed in the supreme test of their lives—

Do your best, whether winning or losing it,
 If you choose to play!—is my principle.
 Let a man contend to the uttermost
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will.

The story is based on an old Florentine legend.

The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church. St. Praxed was the daughter of one of the early converts of St. Paul. The date evidently refers to the late 15th century and early sixteenth, when the Popes (Alexander Borgia and Leo Medici) were luxury-loving humanists.

The monologue reveals the vain and wordly character of the Bishop. In his enfeebled condition he unreservedly pours out his chaotic thoughts and emotions to his sons. The two emotions that agitate him most are his envy of Bishop Gandolph and his consuming passion for a splendid monument—all peach-blossom marble, jasper, and lapis lazuli with Biblical scenes alongside of Nymphs and Pans etc., topped by an epitaph in choice Latin. Fearing his sons may not carry out his wishes, he tempts them with sensual delights—villas, baths, beautiful mistresses, horses, etc. Incidentally the monologue also depicts the character of the age in which even the Popes had forgotten their spiritual mission under the impact of the Renaissance.

Bishop Blougram's Apology. The monologue is a long-winded and subtle argument in defence of a Catholic Bishop whose belief does not extend to all the doctrines of the Catholic faith. The Bishop anticipates the objections and criticisms of his interlocutor Gigadibs, 'the literary man', who is an unbeliever. The chief point of the defence is that unbelief is as unsafe as belief, for one is as open to doubt as the other. This being so, why not enjoy the worldly advantages appertaining to belief, however, partial? There is good deal of sophistry inextricably blended with truth. For example, complete belief is equated with the sight of God which 'no flesh shall dare'. Few readers would undertake to go through the mental gymnastics necessary to follow the subtle and ingenious argument extending to more than a thousand lines of loose blank verse. Indeed one wonders if it is poetry at all.

One Word More. This poem which forms the epilogue to *Men and Women* is a graceful tribute to Mrs. Browning in response to her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The poet imagined Raphael and Dante speaking to their beloveds in an art different from that which they employed to speak to their wider public. Raphael, a painter, pleased his mistress with a poem; Dante, a poet, pleased his with a picture. Browning, lacking their versatility, adopts the device of dropping the mask of drama which characterises his other poems in *Men and Women*, and gives direct expression to his love and devotion.

Dramatis Personae

Abt Vogler (After he has been extemporising upon the musical

instrument of his invention).

Abt or Abbe, originally abbot, means a French priest.

Abt Vogler (1749-1814) was a Catholic priest who invented a portable organ and effected many improvements in the mechanism of this musical instrument.

Just as at a word from Solomon the *Jinns* or spirits under his control had raised a magnificent palace for the princess he loved, so by his touch on the keys of the organ Vogler calls up a vision of God—a glorious palace where earth meets heaven, and past, present, and future merge together. Music is superior to the other arts in that it is the direct voice of God speaking to man. The musician laments that the palace built by music has disappeared with the music. Presently, however, he realises that his creation is permanent—that “there shall never be one lost good”. And good includes not only the good accomplished, but all the good we have willed, hoped, or dreamed. Our imperfections on the earth are perfected in heaven.

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

Our failures, discords, sufferings, doubts—all have their uses in that they make us prize their opposites: success, harmony, joy, certainty.

The rest may reason and welcome:
It is we musicians know.

Rabbi Ben Ezra. The poem is an exposition of Browning's philosophy put in the mouth of Rabbi Ben Ezra (1092-1168?), a Jewish scholar noted for his *Commentaries* on the Old Testament. Shorn of its prolixities and tortuous metaphors, it may be summed up as follows.

Man's soul is divine and immortal, unaffected by earth's changes. Our life here is simply for shaping and perfecting us, for God designed a perfect whole. This perfection is reached through stages, youth preparing us to face old age, and old age in turn preparing us to face death. The world's judgment of our worth is faulty, based as it is only on what we have achieved. Our worth to God includes all that we aspired to be but were not.

Prospice. Among the best and one of the most popular of Browning's shorter poems, *Prospice* (meaning ‘look forward’) was written after his wife's death. It testifies to Browning's unshrinking courage in facing death—

I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forebore
And bade me creep past.

For this last fight he was fortified with his twin belief in immortality and reunion of lovers. He is sure to meet his wife again: “O

thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again."

The Ring and the Book. This is by far the longest poem in the English language and was long regarded as Browning's masterpiece. It is certainly a *tour de force*, but like *Paradise Lost* and *Fairy Queen*, it has been more admired than read. The title is explained by the method adopted by ancient Italian goldsmiths in making a ring. They mixed with pure gold a little alloy to harden it; then they poured over it some acid which would eat away the alloy, leaving the chased ring intact. In the same way Browning has added to the crude facts of the story his own fancy to produce a finished work of art. In short he is the Ring.

Browning took the story from an old book picked up at a Florentine bookstall. It relates how Count Guido who had murdered his innocent wife Pompilin, was arrested, tried and sentenced to death (Rome, 1698). This story is expanded by Browning into a series of ten inordinately long monologues in which the same story is repeated with variations depending upon the prejudices of the speaker. His aim was to show how truth is distorted by interested persons. Pompilia and the Pope (who presided over the trial) are the two most impressive characters.

If Browning wanted to startle the public by his originality and industry, he certainly succeeded. His poem, however, did not. Its length is against it.

Browning presents an almost complete contrast to Tennyson. Tennyson was completely representative of his age. He gloried in the greatness of England, its democracy and freedom, and dreamed of "the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World." Browning kept aloof from the political and religious turmoil of the age. He lived and wrote as if such things as the Reform Bills, the Corn Laws, Chartism, Catholic Emancipation, the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny had never been. The only evidence we have of his patriotism is furnished by two little poems *Home Thoughts from Abroad* and *Home Thoughts from the Sea*. It is true he lived in Italy after his marriage, but he was quite as unresponsive to the Italian struggle for independence even when Mrs. Browning was so sympathetic to it (*Casa Guidi Windows*). Tennyson was assailed by religious doubt and incertitude which he overcame after an agonising struggle only to reach a faith "that somehow good will be the final goal of ill." Browning had no doubts. He had confidence, and triumphant faith in God and Immortality. "The rest may reason and welcome: 't is we musicians know." Nowhere, however, is the contrast between the two poets more glaring than in their poetic techniques. Tennyson, Keatsian in tradition, is first and foremost an artist, a creator of beauty; Browning, on the other hand, is first and foremost a philosopher, showing scant regard for beauty or melody.

Though being a poet of the 19th century, he could not altogether escape the influences of Romanticism, Browning was definitely not a Romantic. He certainly loved Nature and shows a keen appreciation of her beauties (*Home Thought from Abroad*, Pippa's oft-

quoted song, *Saul*, etc.) but Nature except for a brief spell in the 18th century, has been a perennial element of English poetry and especially after Wordsworth it is inconceivable that any poet worth the name could do without it. Besides, his interest in Nature is neither so prominent nor persistent as in the case of the Romantics. His affiliations with them in other respects are equally weak or insignificant. In particular he lacked their most important quality—an acute sensitiveness to beauty. He cared more for strength. His intellectual curiosity led him into strange and unconventional paths and if he must be labelled, it would be safer to dub him a psychological realist. He has affinities with Donne among his predecessors and with Meredith and T.S. Eliot among the moderns. It is easy to see why he is preferred to Tennyson today.

It is significant that not until the second edition of *Bells and Pomegranates* appeared in 1848 did any publisher risk his money on Browning. Many wondered if he was a poet at all. His marriage seems to have done a miracle, for all his best things were produced after that happy event. Since his popularity in his own time and for a long time after rested on his philosophy, it would be well to have a second look at the poems in which it finds its most eloquent expression. These are *A Grammarian's Funeral*, *Andrea del Sarto*, *Abt Vogler*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and *Prospice*. It may be summarised as follows.

To Browning God and Immortality are self evident truths. "The rest may reason and welcome; 't is we musicians know". God is love, which is manifested in the manifold life of man and nature. Love which created life is, therefore, its fundamental principle, and it is only through love that man can reach God—the absolute, the Infinite. "O world as God has made it! all is beauty; And knowing this, is love, and love is duty" (*The Guardian Angel*). Life is imperfect, it has failure, error, evil, misery. This imperfection is a blessing in disguise, for man's salvation lies in ceaseless struggle to overcome his imperfections and failures. The struggle is ceaseless because man's ideal is never attained, nor meant to be attained on earth, for the ideal gets higher and higher from age to age as man rises higher and higher in his spiritual evolution. "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp/Or what's a Heaven for?" Our failures thus are triumphs: "On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round." Besides, we are to be judged not by our accomplished deeds but by what we intended or aspired to do. "It is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!" (*Saul*, 295)

"Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped"

Finally, this philosophy of the strenuous life is topped by Browning's 'robust optimism' of God's in his heaven and all's right with the world.

It is an invigorating philosophy and contrasts strongly with the sceptical, despairing and pessimistic outlook of the Victorian prophets. Browning's vitality and happy marriage were important factors in producing this result. His robust optimism, however, sounds rather facile by the side of Tennyson's more subdued faith inasmuch as the latter had passed through the fires of doubt. As regards the philosophy of the strenuous life, Tennyson said the same thing in *Ulysses*: "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Next in importance to his philosophical poems are Browning's love poems. His own intense love affair and elopement with Elizabeth Barrett had brought home to him the unfathomed deeps of love. Love was the one impenetrable mystery which awed and hushed him. The three poems in which he expressed his own personal sentiments for his wife are among the greatest love poems in English language (*By the Fire-side, One Word More, O Lyric Love*). For the most part, however, his poems of love are dramatic lyrics in which he describes the thoughts and feelings of lovers in various situations, favourable and unfavourable. They are all marked by a tenderness which is touching even when it was coupled with manliness. Those deserving special mention are: *The Lost Mistress, Evelyn Hope, The Last Ride Together, The Statue and the Bust, Confessions, Meeting at Night*.

Other interests of Browning, besides Philosophy and Love were the art of the Renaissance and religion in general. He interprets the spirit of the Renaissance in such poems as *A Grammarian's Funeral, Fra Lippo Lippi, Andrea del Sarto*, and *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church*. His noteworthy religious poems are: *Christmas Eve and Easter Day, Saul, The Guardian Angel, Holy-Cross Day, Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, An Epistle Containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician, Bishop Blougram's Apology, and Caliban upon Setebos*.

Browning was interested not in movements but in men—men as individuals. Though he wrote half a dozen plays, he did not succeed as a dramatist, for he had not the skill to delineate character in action. So he settled for the form known as Dramatic Monologue, which is a long soliloquy designed to reveal the speaker's character. Browning said he was interested in "incidents in the development of the soul." In other words, what interested him was not the outer world of action but the inner world of the soul—the composite aggregate of thoughts, feelings, impulses, memories, tastes etc., which constitute personality.

The question whether Browning is dramatic does not admit of a categorical answer. Some of his admirers have compared him with Shakespeare. This is absurd. Others have denied him dramatic quality altogether. This too is an extreme view. The truth is that some of Browning's characters are undoubtedly objective delineations, e.g. the Bishop of St. Praxed's, Bishop Blougram, the Duke of Ferrara (*My Last Duchess*). But this cannot be said of all characters in *Men and Women* and *Dramatis Personae*. The lyrical

impulse in Browning was too strong for objectivity. He was too full of his own notions and too eager to express them to allow his characters to speak for themselves. In *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, for instance, he gives himself away by a shriek—

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor!

Most of his characters mouth his own opinions or conclusions. He lacked the self-detachment essential to dramatic presentation of character. In short, Browning was dramatic in intention but seldom in execution.

To sum up, Browning is not everybody's cup of tea. He overdid his 'trick of singularity'. Though he wrote less unintelligible things after *Sordello*, he was never able to live down his reputation for obscurity. The label has stuck to him like a tin-can fastened to a dog's tail. To a great majority he is a sealed book. The reasons for his obscurity are not far to seek. First, his choice of out-of-the-way figures and episodes of little-known history is not very happy. Who has ever heard of the painter of *The Guardian Angel* or for that matter of Fra Lippo Lippi and Andrea del Sarto? And who can derive much pleasure from the company of the grotesque figure of Caliban wallowing in his slush pond? Second, obscure allusions, and technical terms of art irritate the reader (*Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, *The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's*, *Abt Vogler*). Third, a compression of style which omits relative pronouns and other grammatical connectives produces syntactical riddles. Fourth, the complexity and subtlety of thought and argument such as that in *Bishop Blougram's Apology* is baffling. Last but not the least, his harsh, rough, unmusical rhythms jar upon the ears. The blank verse of *Blougram's Apology* is so free and loose that one is tempted to echo Pope and say, "It is not poetry, but prose run mad." Browning's much-lauded philosophy is no compensation for the joy of poetry. Philosophy to be worthy of poetry must be transmuted to beauty. Browning sacrificed beauty and music to strength. Today it is not the philosopher Browning that attracts; it is rather the gay, quizzical Browning of *The Pied Piper*, *My Last Duchess* and *The Grammarian's Funeral* that has the greater appeal.

MRS. BROWNING

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), six years older than her husband, was regarded in her time as the greatest woman-poet of England. Today she is better known by the romantic circumstances of her marriage and elopement with Robert Browning. Their love-story, so often told, is now a classic of romance in real life since Rudolph Besier's play, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1930). The romance did wonders to both. Like Browning, she produced her best work *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850) under the influence of love. The sonnets,

forty-four in number, reflect the whole course of their love and courtship. The puzzle of 'the Portuguese' is explained by the fact that Browning used to call her 'my little Portuguese' from her poem *Catarina to Camoens*. Before her marriage she had attained fame by a volume of short lyrics including *Cowper's Grave* (1838) and *The Cry of Children* (1844). *Cowper's Grave* is remarkable for its tender pity and Christian piety. *The Cry of Children* is a strong protest against the employment of children in coal-mines and factories. The Brownings settled at Casa Guidi in Florence and had one son. Mrs. Browning's enthusiasm for the cause of Italian liberty is expressed in her *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851). Of the poems written during the remaining ten years of her life the most important is *Aurora Leigh* (1857). It is a modern romance in blank verse. Almost epical in length (it has 11,000 lines), it deals in an out-spoken manner with the social problems of the time, especially problems of Victorian women. The opinions expressed by Aurora Leigh (an orphan who marries her cousin, a blind and impoverished philanthropist) are those of the author herself.

Unlike her husband, Mrs. Browning belongs to the romantic tradition and is essentially lyrical. She is remarkable for her frank expression of passion and for moral courage in attacking social injustice. Critics have been rather hard on her by insisting too much on her emotionalism. A little gush in a lady is quite understandable and is not necessarily exhibitionism. Her real fault, like her husband's, is verbosity. The severe technique of the form saved her *Sonnets* from this defect. Besides, though her verse is generally musical, its melody is now and then marred by imperfect rhymes. For example—

The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehoods ways removing,
Its women and men became, beside him, true and loving. (*Cowper's Grave*)

Perhaps she did nothing better than her little poem on "the great god Pan", styled *The Musical Instrument*, beginning 'What was he doing, the great god Pan—Down in the reeds by the river?'

Her modest excellences also included a happy gift of epigrammatic expression—

Get leave to work
In this world-'tis the best you get at all!
For God in cursing, gives us better gifts
Than men in benediction.

(*Aurora Leigh*)

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold (1822-88), next great poet after Tennyson and Browning, was a classicist and pessimist. Eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous headmaster of Rugby, he was educated at Winchester, Rugby, and Balliol College, Oxford. He was appointed Inspector of Schools in 1851 and in the same year he married the daughter of a

judge. He held the government post for 35 years (1851-86). For ten years (1857-67), during his inspectorate, he was also Professor of Poetry at Oxford. His poetical works are: *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* (1849), *Empedocles on Etna* (1852), *Poems, first series* (1853), *Poems, second series* (1855), *Merope, A Tragedy* (1858), *New Poems* (1867). His literary criticism is contained in the prefaces to the first and second editions of the 1853 volume and in *Essays in Criticism* (two series). His other prose works are listed in the chapter on Prose.

Brief Notices of Important Poems

Shakespeare. In this famous sonnet Arnold praises above all other qualities Shakespeare's objectivity, his complete reticence about himself—

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art sill,
Out-topping knowledge. . . .

Resignation. This poem is important as it embodies Arnold's initial conception of the poet's calling. The poet's function, he says, is not to scan his own soul, but to scan man calmly and objectively. The poet is content to share the general life of man and Nature, and he preserves 'his sad lucidity of soul' undisturbed by accidents of fortune. A nobler ideal of the poet is given in *The Strayed Reveller*.

Other notable poems of the early period are *Quiet Work*, *To a Friend* (both Sonnets) and *Requiescat*, (a song for the repose of the dead).

Sohrab and Rustum. A mini-epic in blank verse. The story is taken from the *Shah Nama* of the eleventh century Persian poet Firdausi. Rustum, a Persian hero, marries the daughter of a neighbouring king, but soon leaves the court in quest of adventure. While he is away his son Sohrab is born and grows up to become the hero of his grand-father's army. War breaks out between the two peoples and their armies encamp on the banks of the Oxus. A single combat between the champions of the two armies is arranged and Sohrab is mortally wounded by Rustum. The dying son is recognised by the father by a gold bracelet which he had given to his wife. They weep in each other's arms, Sohrab dies, and the war ends. Rustum goes back home stricken with grief and remorse. With its choice diction, tailed smiles, and deep pathos of the concluding scene, this short epic has something of Homeric grandeur. The elegiac note is heightened by the last stanza, which describes the majestic march of the Oxus, supremely indifferent to the tragedy that has been enacted on its banks—

But the majestic river floated on
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon;.....
.....till at last

The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
 His luminous home of waters opens, bright
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
 Emerge, and shine upon the Aral sea.

Classic or romantic—why quarrel over words in the presence of such exquisite poetry?

Forsaken Merman. This is the lament of a Merman (mer-man = male counterpart of a mermaid) whose human wife has left him and her children at their home under the sea, and gone back to land to pray in her church. He goes ashore, waits outside the church whose doors are shut, and returns disappointed. A very original poem remarkable for its pathos and metrical skill.

Of the other narrative poems (there are seven in all) *Balder Dead* and *Tristram and Iseult* will repay reading. The first deals with Scandanavian mythology; the second with the all too familiar love story of old romance. In Arnold's version Tristram lies dying at his home in Brittany. His wish to see his beloved Iseult of Britain is fulfilled. She comes and he dies after the meeting. His wife Iseult of Brittany distracts her children's attention by relating the story of Merlin and Vivian. The poem has more pathos than passion.

LYRICS

Switzerland. The group of poems styled *Switzerland* comprises seven poems addressed to or about Marguerite, a French girl who had captivated Arnold as a youngman at Berne (Switzerland). Returning there after a year he discovered that she had transferred her affection to another. So he bade her farewell and sought refuge in the mountains. In No. 4. (*To Marguerite*) after bidding her farewell, he addresses himself thus—

.....and thou, thou lonely heart,
 Which never yet without remorse
 Even for a moment didst depart
 From thy remote and sphered course
 To haunt the place where passions reign—
 Back to thy solitude again.

This is the speech of a prig. Arnold was too austere a person to have much passion, and the poems are love poems only in name. They are full of rhetoric and moralisings in place of ecstasies of passion.

The interest of No. 5, which is a continuation of No. 4 lies in its statement of Arnold's belief that man is essentially lonely—an important element in his philosophy. No person understands another. In fact, no person understands himself. Hence his advice "Know thyself"—the famous Greek motto. (*See, Self-dependence*)

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
 With echoing straits between us thrown,
 Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
 We mortal millions live *alone*.
 The islands feel the enclasping flow,
 And then their endless bounds they know.

The Strayed Reveller. A young shepherd has strayed one early morning into the palace of Circe, the enchantress. Finding the palace silent and empty he drinks the bowl of wine that stood on the altar and sinks down to sleep. Circe and Ulysses who had been hunting in the woods return in the evening. After introduction, Ulysses asks the Youth if he has heard any songs of a divine bard. The Youth replies that the bards have the same vision as the gods, but they have to pay a heavy price for that vision. They must suffer like man—

These things Ulysses
The wise Bards also
Behold and sing.
But Oh, what labour!
O Prince, what pain.
 such a price
The Gods exact for song;
To become what we sing.

Dover Beach. Though a love poem it is more rhetorical than lyrical. It is so popular because it contains the most memorable expression of Arnold's grief at his loss of faith—

The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help, nor pains;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Of the other lyrics, large in number, the more interesting are: *Self-Defence*, *Morality*, and *The Buried Life*.

The Scholar Gipsy and *Thyrsis* are closely linked and should be read together.

The Scholar Gipsy, a pastoral poem, is based upon an old legend related by Joseph Glanvil, a 17th century clergyman in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, of a young student of Oxford who forced by poverty left the University and joined a band of wandering gipsies. The scholar, though dead and buried two hundred years before, is used by Arnold as a symbol to bemoan the fate of his own generation that suffers from 'this strange disease of modern man/With its sick hurry, its divided aims'. The scholar has perennial youth and is still roaming the Oxford countryside, because he early escaped from

the distracted life of civilisation with its mental strife, half-belief, multifarious schemes, shocks and disappointments. He is urged to shun 'our feverish contact like a Tyrian trader sailing away to Spain at the sight of wily Greek mariners with their tempting goods'.

Thyrsis. This elegy, in memory of Arnold's friend Arthur Hugh Clough, was written some four years after his death in 1861. It follows the same pattern as *The Scholar Gipsy*—in its pastoral form and general tone. Personal sorrow in both poems is associated with the same Oxfordshire countryside that had been the favourite haunt of the two friends. References to the scholar-gipsy and the signal-tree on the hilltop indicate some hidden meaning which was understood only by Arnold and Clough. It is not cleared beyond saying that as long as that tree stands the scholar-gipsy will continue roaming the hillside and Heavenly light beckoning.

Why does the gipsy-scholar haunt that hillside? What does he seek?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
 Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
 This does not come with houses or with gold,
 With place, with honour, and a flattering crew.
 'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold.
 But the smooth-slipping weeks
 Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired.
 Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
 He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
 Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Memorial Verses (1850). In these Arnold pays a tribute to Byron, Goethe and Wordsworth. Arnold liked Byron in spite of himself, for though 'He taught us little'; he had impressive power. Goethe he regarded as 'Europe's sagest head'. Wordsworth, however, evoked his deepest admiration—

Time may restore us in his course
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force
 But where will Europe's latter hour
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power?

Rugby Chapel (1857). In this Arnold pays a noble and well-deserved tribute to the memory of his father who had died fifteen years before—

Fifteen years have gone round
 Since thou arosest to tread
 In the summer-morning, the road
 Of death, at a call unforeseen,
 Sudden, For fifteen years,
 We who till then in thy shade
 Rested as under the boughs
 Of a mighty oak, have endured
 Sunshine and rain as we might,
 Bare, unshaded, alone
 Lacking the shelter of thee.

Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse. Arnold visited La Grande Chartreuse, the Carthusian monastery near Grenoble (S.E. of France). He was struck by the severe discipline of the monks—their austere living, their hard beds, their eternal fastings and prayers. He laments that his teachers have long ago deprived him of his simple faith, and though he would, he cannot be a believer. Old faith lost, and no new faith to take its place, this dooms him to a life of gloom and despair—

Wandering between two worlds, one dead.
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

Stanzas on the Author of 'Obermann'. The author of *Obermann*, a sentimental French novel without sentimentality, was Etienne Pivert de Senancour (1770-1846). He was little known in his own country. A pensive, sensitive soul, he escaped from the storm and stress of his times—the French Revolution and the fast changing world—and took refuge in the Alpine forests and mountains of Switzerland. His isolation had great attraction for Arnold. His tomb in Paris bears this inscription: 'Eternity, be thou My refuge'. The gist of the poem is contained in the following stanza—

He who hath watch'd, not shared, the strife,
Knows how the day hath gone.
He only lives with the world's life,
Who hath renounced his own.

Obermann Once More. Arnold visited Obermann's chalet above Lake Geneva many years after the preceding poem was written. In an evening reverie, while resting outside the chalet, he conjures up the figure of Obermann. Obermann surveys the history of 2,000 years—Roman Empire, rise and decay of Christianity, French Revolution, etc., and asks Arnold to do all he can to make the world attain its old order, especially a universal faith for guiding mankind. Arnold's feeling for Obermann is summed up in the following stanza—

Again I feel the words inspire
Their mournful calm; serene,
Yet tinged with infinite desire
For all that *might* have been.

The stanza is also the best commentary on Arnold's own poetry.

The famous and oft quoted stanza describing the attitude of the East to the Roman Conquest occurs in this poem.

The East bow'd low before the blast
 In patient deep disdain;
 She let the legions thunder past,
 And plunged in thought again.

Empedocles on Etna. Published in 1852 but withdrawn for reasons given in the Preface to the 1853 volume. At the persuasion of friends, however, it was restored in the *New Poems* of 1867. It is a dramatic poem in two parts, or as the author is pleased to call them, Acts. Empedocles, a Greek philosopher and scientist of Agrigentum in Sicily, lived in the 5th century B.C. He survived all his friends and companions living on into an age from which the characteristic virtues—joy in life and objectivity—were fast disappearing, giving place to sophistication, introspection, doubt, and depression. Empedocles, whose habits of mind were fixed, found it difficult to adjust himself to the changed times. Ill-treated and banished from his city he goes up to Mt. Etna, accompanied by a devoted physician Pausanias, and followed unseen at a distance by a youthful harp-player Callicles. After expounding his philosophy in a long speech, to the accompaniment of his harp, he dismisses Pausanias and climbs to the top of the mountain. Here, after a soliloquy on his utter loneliness, he plunges into the crater of the volcano.

His philosophy is that Man's desires are the chief cause of his misery. It is vain to rail at God or Fate. Bliss can be attained by moderating our desire. As regards God, he must be of the same stuff as man and the universe. To know, therefore, one's own self and to live in the light of that knowledge is to attain perfection. The speeches also indicate his belief in rebirth. The reason for his suicide is that he can live neither with men nor with himself. He is the slave of *mind* and *thought*, and it is impossible to escape from them. Everything will return to the elements it came from, but mind and thought, have no parent element to receive them back. To live with an 'eternally restless mind' is impossible.

The suicide was obviously prompted by a morbid imagination—reason enough for Arnold's disapproval. The poem is otherwise a fine one.

Merope, A Tragedy. This is a regular drama on the Greek model with chorus and little action. It is not meant for the stage. The story of the drama as given by Arnold is as follows.

Cresphontes, a descendant of Hercules had not long reigned in Messenia when he was murdered together with his two sons, by a chief Polyphantes. Polyphantes, also descended from Hercules, took the throne and married against her will Merope, the widow of the murdered king. But Merope had a third son Aepytus by Cresphontes, and him she gave in infancy to her own father to bring up. Cresphontes made every attempt to find him but failed. Aepytus, when he grew up, vowed to avenge his father's murder. So he came to Polyphantes and reported the death of the third son of Merope and Cresphontes. The king was mightily pleased and ordered a

sacrificial feast to celebrate the happy event. Aepytus, the honoured guest, pretending to kill the sacrificial animal, slew the king, and so got back his father's throne.

Criticism

Eminent as poet, critic, and prophet, Matthew Arnold made his mark in his own time as an apostle of culture. As poet, he was like Gray and did not speak out freely. As critic, he ranks with the greatest—Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Eliot and it is principally as a critic that he is best remembered today.

Though his poetic production is comparatively small and his range narrow, he represents more fully than Tennyson one real phase of the Victorian era—the loss of faith which troubled many earnest and sincere lives. Tennyson struggled with his doubts and overcame them; Arnold never grew out of them. His heart longed for the simple and assured faith of his forbears, but his head refused to accept it without proof. It is because of this state of mind that Arnold has stronger appeal for the moderns than Tennyson or Browning. His confident expectation expressed in a letter to Clough that “I am likely to have my turn as they (Tennyson and Browning) have had theirs” has been fulfilled.

A survey of Arnold's works reveals two contrasted moods. In his poetry he is sad and restless because of his loss of faith; in his prose, on the other hand, he is light-hearted, confident, even gay. The explanation of this puzzle seems to be that poetry being more philosophical than prose, he put his innermost self, his gravest thoughts, in his poems.

Arnold defined poetry as ‘a criticism of life’. In plain language this means that poetry is a vehicle for the poet's view of the world, his outlook on life, his philosophy, his moral teaching. In this view he was strongly influenced by the classical writers. He drew his inspiration from the Greek masters—Homer, Epictetus, Sophocles—‘who saw life steadily and saw it whole’ (*To a Friend*). By this he means that a poem should treat the subject as a whole in order to produce one profound moral impression. He condemned the tendency of romantic poets (not sparing Shakespeare) to use purple patches or stray outbursts of splendour which distract attention from the poem as a whole. The simplicity and clarity of the classics, he held, was due to their practice of subordinating expression to that which they sought to express. That he himself had imbibed the Greek spirit is amply borne out by the studied simplicity and crystalline clarity of his own style. In versification too Arnold's general practice was to adapt the unrhymed metres of Greek choruses. He avoided rhymed lyrical measures (except in a few poems), and used blank verse only in *Sohrab and Rustum*.

Besides the Greeks, Arnold was a great admirer of Goethe and Wordsworth because of their ‘high seriousness’—their sanity, their wisdom. His own high seriousness consists in a pervasive mood of

serenity tinged with sadness—a 'sad lucidity of soul'. The note of sadness, the elegiac note, in Arnold is deeper than in Tennyson, but it is strictly controlled.

The question whether Arnold is really classical or romantic does not admit of a categorical answer. He is romantic in feeling and classical in expression. As in the case of faith, his head was in conflict with his heart. His critical faculty acted as a brake on his creative instinct. His finest poems, like Wordsworth's, are those in which he forgot his theories. He frowned on purple patches in the romantic poets; yet his own poems are not free from them. Such, for example, are: 'his sad lucidity of soul', 'Who saw life steadily and saw it whole'.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead
The other powerless to be born.
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

But the most glaring example of breach of his rule is the elaborate simile at the end of *The Scholar Gipsy*, of the Tyrian trader. The truth of the matter is that no poet can help such 'occasional outbursts of fine writing', such 'a shower of isolated thoughts and images'. The world would be so much poorer without the oft quoted gems of Shakespeare, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning and Arnold himself. The doctrine of unity can be pushed too far.

Besides, Arnold contradicts himself on a higher ground. According to him the poet is an austere being whose business is not to trace the course of his own soul, but to survey life calmly and impersonally (*Resignation*). Explaining in his Preface to the 1853 volume why he had excluded from it *Empedocles on Enta*, he says that situations "in which the suffering finds no vent in action" are not fit subjects for poetry. The subjects of poetry, he adds in the same Preface, are "actions, human actions, possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet." And yet his practice belies his precept. Whole passages, indeed whole poems, can be cited to show that they are steeped in the poet's own feeling. *Forsaken Merman*, his most original poem is wholly romantic in sentiment, however restrained its expression. The *Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*, his best-known poems, are more about Arnold than about their ostensible subjects. Even *Sohrab and Rustum*, a heroic poem, owes much of its charm to its romantic feeling. Examples need not be multiplied. The distinctive quality of Arnold's poetry lies in the restrained expression of his intense feeling of regret, sorrow, despair, resignation. He spoke more truly of the poet's function in *The Strayed Reveller*. The poet sees like a god and suffers like man. Thirteen of Arnold's poems are classed as 'Elegiac' in the collected edition, the most significant being the two *Obermann* poems and *Grande Chartreuse*. These three, in fact, are philosophically central to his poetry. Most

of the others, though they bear different class names, are informed by the same spirit of personal suffering. In short, Arnold remains, in the main, a lyrical poet in spite of his theory which limits the choice of poetical subjects to great actions. In his Preface to the second edition (1854) of the 1853 volume, he takes note of criticisms voiced against his theory as also of the fact that it takes no account of lyrical poetry. However, he never made his position clear with respect to the latter.

Arnold's 'Criticism of Life'

Though Arnold's definition of poetry as a criticism of life limits the province of poetry, most of his own poetry answers to that definition. Like Wordsworth he was frankly a didactic poet. What is his criticism of life, his philosophy, his teaching? It is a sombre philosophy and its teaching may be summed up in one word: Resignation. Though he had assimilated the Greek spirit, there is one important difference between him and the Greeks. There is little of the Greek joy of life in his poetry. Its dominant characteristic is an elemental note of sadness. According to him the secret of life is not joy, but peace (*Resignation*). And peace, he saw, was difficult to attain in the hurly-burly of the Victorian age. Like Hamlet he found the time out of joint. He was saddened by the spectacle of chaotic creeds, distracted lives, commercialism and moral degradation, and in his heart of hearts longed for a simpler and less sophisticated age. This nostalgia for the past haunts all his poetry. It is significant that three of his longer poems deal with persons who were faced with the same problem of adjustment to new times. The Scholar gipsy left civilisation to find refuge with a band of wandering gipsies; Empedocles found it impossible to live either in society or in solitude and ended his agony by plunging into the crater of Etna; Obermann retired into the Swiss mountains to contemplate his own soul.

Arnold solved his own problem by engaging in quiet work, loving Nature and knowing himself. This 'three-fold prescription for peace though implicit in all his work is most beautifully and clearly stated in *Quiet Work* and *Self-dependence*.

Quiet Work

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
 One lesson which in every wind is blown,
 One lesson of two duties kept at one
 Though the loud world proclaim their enmity--
 Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
 Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
 Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,
 Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!
 Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
 Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
 Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

Self-dependence

Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send;
"Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!"

"Ah, once more", I cried, "Ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon yoh,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!"

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
"Wouldst thou be as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-borne voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like mine own heart I hear:
"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!"

'Love Nature' and 'Know thyself'—these sum up the thought of this lyric. If you want calmness and serenity of the stars live like them. They are self-sufficient and perform their ministry uncomplaining, undemanding. Arnold loved Nature as passionately as Wordsworth and as firmly believed in its healing power. His feeling for Nature, however, was spontaneous and was not induced by Wordsworth. It is an essential ingredient in all his work. Last but not least, look within yourself, contemplate your own soul, for 'Who finds himself, loses his misery'.

Arnold's philosophy is that of intelligent resignation. However sombre, it is sound. It has a strong appeal for sensitive and thoughtful souls everywhere, who are sick of this befouled, tense, almost mad civilisation.

To sum up, Arnold's poetry is its own commentary. He is autobiographically present in every poem—

Again I feel the words inspire
Their mournful calm; serene,
Yet tinged with infinite desire
For all that *might* have been.

This is what Arnold says about Obermann, but it is also the acutest description of his own poetry. Unfortunately, Arnold's worth as a poet is all too often obscured by a discussion of classic and romantic. This battle is a never-ending one and will never be decided to everybody's satisfaction. The only issue in judging a poet is, or should be, whether he has genuine poetical inspiration. Of this there can be no doubt in the case of Arnold. It is wrong to judge his poetry on the basis of his theories. Theory emanates from the mind, poetry from the heart. For an objective assessment it is unnecessary to inquire too curiously to what extent Arnold's critical faculty curbed his poetic impulse. What matters is the resultant poetry.

Just because he defined poetry as a 'criticism of life', some critics have concluded that Arnold's poetry is therefore cold, unemotional and lacking in spontaneity. By the same token Wordsworth should also be rated as a cold intellectual, for he too had emphasised his role as a teacher, a critic of life. Merely because Arnold lacks the abandon of the romantic poets it does not follow that he lacks feeling or emotion. He speaks from the depths of his soul. Indeed, it is the intensity and sincerity of his feeling that constitutes the chief appeal of his poetry. Only, he is economical of words and keeps his voice low and soft, which are additional charms. Far from detracting from his excellence, they show how careful he was in his artistic technique.

CLOUGH

Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-61), son of a Liverpool cloth merchant, educated at Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford; Fellow and tutor at Oxford for some time; later Warden of University Hall, London; still later an officer in the Education office; died at Florence at the early age of 42. His longer poems are *The Bothie*, *Amours de Voyage*, and *Dipsychus*. He also wrote many lyrics.

The Bothie (bothie = a hut) a 'Long-Vacation pastoral', his principal poem, describes a trip of Oxford students to the Highlands. There are descriptions of Highland scenery and a love-story in which Philip Hewson, an Oxford radical, marries Elsie, a village girl and they emigrate to New Zealand where they settle down to farming. The poem is in harsh hexameters.

Amours de Voyage. This is a series of amusing letters in hexameters telling the story of an English love-affair in Italy during the Italian revolution. The parties are English tourists in Rome. The

progress of the love-affair between Claude and Mary Trevellyn is reported through letters. Claude writes to his friend Eustace, and Mary to Louisa, a friend of the family and to Miss Roper, her teacher. Claude is half-hearted in love as in religion and politics. He is all sympathy for the Italian cause, but makes all sorts of excuses for not participating in the struggle—

Why not fight?—In the first place, I haven't so much as a musket;
 In the next, if I had, I shouldn't know how to use it;
 In the third, just at present, I'm studying ancient marbles;
 In the fourth, I consider I owe my life to my country;
 In the fifth,—I forget, but four good reasons are ample.
 Meantime pray let 'em fight, and be killed.
 I delight in devotion.
 So that I list not, hurrah for the glorious army of martyrs!
*Sanguis martyrum semen Ecclesiae** though it would seem this
 Church is indeed of the purely Invisible Kingdom-come kind:
 Militant here on earth! Triumphant, of course, then, elsewhere!
 Ah, good Heaven, but I would I were out far away from the pother.

The girl's family moves out of Rome to other Italian towns—Florence, Como, Naples, etc., and thence to Lucerne (Switzerland). Claude doesn't join them on the pretext of studying ancient marbles, and when he does follow them without much enthusiasm, he misses them narrowly at every place. The affair doesn't come to anything, but the story cannot be said to be a tragedy, for the girl too is not very enthusiastic and takes the failure philosophically.

Dipsychus (double-souled). The theme of this poem is "the conflict between the tender conscience and the world." This is represented by a debate between *Dipsychus* and *Mephistopheles*. The latter commends Commonsense whose motto is 'to submit' to the ways of the world, although they are not too honest. After stout resistance, *Dipsychus* succumbs to the devil's counsel and comes to grief. He rises to the position of Lord Chief Justice through a beautiful woman whom he deserts afterwards to marry another. At the height of his career the woman begs him to take her back, but he refuses. Pricked by conscience he gets a seizure and dies.

Of the lyrics, only one has found place in popular anthologies: 'Say not the struggle naught availeth'.

Of his many poems of religious scepticism the most amusing is *The Latest Decalogue* (the Ten Commandments) given below—

Thou shalt have one God only; who
 Would be at the expense of two?
 No graven images may be
 Worshipped, except the currency:
 Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
 Thine enemy is none the worse:
 At church on Sunday to attend
 Will serve to keep the world thy friend;

*The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church.

Honour thy parents; that is, all
 From whom advancement may befall:
 Thou shalt not kill; but needst not strive
 Officially to keep alive:
 Do not adultery commit;
 Advantage rarely comes of it:
 Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
 When it's so lucrative to cheat:
 Bear not false witness; let the lie
 Have time on its own wings to fly:
 Thou shalt not covet; but tradition
 Approves all forms of competition.

The sum of all is, thou shalt love,
 If anybody, God above:
 At any rate shall never labour
More than thyself to love thy neighbour.

The basic similarities between Arnold and Clough may, at first sight, tempt one to dismiss Clough with the remark that he is a minor Arnold. But there are significant differences. Both suffered from spiritual unrest born of religious doubt, but while Arnold struggled through to a working philosophy of life, the conflict in Clough was much too strong for him to achieve any positive hold on life. Arnold speaks of God and religion with humility and reverence; Clough with a degree of levity that repels many. Finally, Clough shows a sense of humour which is totally absent in Arnold. Though a much lesser poet, he represents even more emphatically than Arnold the conflict between religion and the intellectual developments of the time in which he lived.

This conflict is the very substance of his poetry. A sincere searcher after Truth, he was bewildered by life, which seemed to have no meaning. We do not know whence we come and where we go. But we plod on, struggle on, and the joy of struggle is all we know.

Say not the Struggle Naught Availeth

Say not the struggle naught availeth,
 The labour and the wounds are vain,
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
 And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
 It may be, in yon, smoke conceal'd,
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
 And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
 Seem here no painful inch to gain,
 Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
 Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
 When daylight comes, comes in the light;
 In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
 But westward, look, the land is bright!

FITZGERALD

Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83) of Irish stock was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge and was a great friend of Tennyson and Thackeray. Tennyson dedicated his *Tieresias* to him and Thackeray when going to America in 1852 asked him in a most affectionate letter to be his literary executor in case something should happen to him. He was a man of means and lived in the country like a gentleman hermit passing his time in reading, yachting, gardening and cultivating friendships. He was a scholar of Greek, Spanish and Persian. His first publication was *Euphranor*, a charming prose dialogue on Youth; this was followed by *Polonius*, a collection of wise sayings. He translated eight dramas from the Spanish of Calderon and three from the Greek—*Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, and *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus* of Sophocles.

But that which has made him immortal was his free translation or adaptation of the quatrains or *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, the Persian poet of the 11th century. Whatever liberties Fitzgerald may have taken with the original, scholars of Persian are agreed that he has substantially reproduced the doctrine of Omar. This doctrine is a mixture of skepticism, fatalism and hedonism--this last being the most important. For though life is short and death certain, we can still make the most of what life has to offer--the beauty of the world and its pleasures. The poet's advice is to live for the day and not bother about tomorrow--'To take the Cash and let the Credit go'.

The impact of the *Rubaiyat* on the Victorians was startling. It awakened them to the Oriental view of life, especially its fatalism, which is so foreign to the Western mind. Hedonism they knew, but it was never presented more charmingly. The slow, haunting music of the stanza (the first, second, and fourth lines rhyming, the third unrhymed) and the perfect word and phrase make the poem an ideal companion for an indolent hour. Fitzgerald was only a translator, not a creator in the technical sense, but as Swinburne said: "His daring genius gave Omar Khayyam a place forever among the greatest English poets." And that goes for the translator too, whatever the literary pundits might say.

XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread--and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness--
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come:
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
 Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
 How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
 Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

XXI

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
 To-day of past Regret and Future Fears:
 To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
 Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend
 Before we too into the Dust descend;
 Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie,
 Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
 Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
 About it and about: but evermore
 Came out by the same door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
 And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
 And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
 'I came like Water, and like Wind I go.'

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
 Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
 Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
 To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
 Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
 Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire.

CHAPTER 38

VICTORIAN LITERATURE: POETRY (2)

The pre-Raphaelites: Rossetti—Christina Rossetti—Morris—Swinburne.

Spasmodics

Before passing to the next important group of poets, mention must be made of the Spasmodic school that flourished about the middle of the century. The school included J.P. Bailey, Sidney Dobell and Alexander Smith. They were called Spasmodics because they were supposed to have spasms or fits of romanticism reflected in their poetry. They attempted to out-do the romantic poets by excess of every kind—exuberant fancy (not imagination), rich imagery, and verbosity. They were immensely popular in their time, though the sham was detected by quite a few of the discerning critics. Bailey, especially, attained great fame as the writer of *Festus*, a huge dramatic poem on the *Faust* legend. It was praised even by such men as Tennyson and Thackeray. Later critics, however, have denied it even the name of poetry. This is hardly fair. Although few can have the hardihood to read the entire poem, which in its final edition exceeds 40,000 lines, such extracts as have been quoted by its admirers show remarkable poetic talents in the writer. The other two may well rest in the limbo of oblivion to which they have been consigned.

A word must be said about the inventor of the term 'Spasmodic'. This was W.E. Aytoun, a Scottish lawyer and man of letters. He parodied the Spasmodic School in his *Firmilian; or The Student of Badajoz, A Spasmodic Tragedy*. Firmilian, a student at the university of Badajoz (in Spain), rejects as useless one after another the conventional studies in theology, law, medicine and philosophy, and takes to poetry. The god Pan advises him to live for himself alone, to gratify all his appetites undeterred by any scruples. Firmilian thereupon enters upon a career of crime and cruelty to learn at first hand the experiences of a murderer, so that in his tragedy on the subject of Cain the first murderer, he may adequately 'paint the mental spasms that tortured' him. Firmilian's crimes lead to funny results.

Aytoun's other popular works which enjoyed contemporary popularity are: *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* and *Bon Gaultier Ballads*. 'Bon Gaultier' was the pseudonym adopted by Sir Theodore Martin, a lawyer, who collaborated with Aytoun in writing the ballads. The ballads are parodies of many poets and styles such as Tennyson, Macaulay, Mrs. Browning, etc.

The pre-Raphaelite School

The Spasmodics have little intrinsic worth, but they have some historical importance in that they illustrate the curious literary phenomenon that third-rate poetry may exist side by side with the first-rate and may even gain a temporary advantage over it by sheer novelty. Real renewal of the romantic tradition—supposing it to have been broken by Browning and Arnold—was the work of a group of poets known as the pre-Raphaelites. About the middle of the century—in 1848 to be precise—a few painters combined to oppose the existing pompous conventions of Academies of Art which ignored such modern painters as Blake, Turner and Constable. They called themselves pre-Raphaelites to emphasise their admiration for the Italian painters before Raphael (1483-1520) whose work they thought was characterised by simplicity, sincerity and religious feeling. The term thus meant a return to medievalism, one of the chief characteristics of Romanticism. Though a painters' movement, its connection with literature was due to the fact that its leader D.G. Rossetti was both painter and poet. The purely painter members who founded 'The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood' such as Holman Hunt, J.E. Millais and others do not concern us. The poets who besides Rossetti came to be associated with the group were William Michael Rossetti, the brother of D.G.; Christina Rossetti, his sister; William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne. The pre-Raphaelites found an ardent supporter in Ruskin who too was a great admirer of the Middle Ages. Their creed, as stated in their magazine *The Germ*, was 'an entire adherence to the simplicity of art'. The magazine started in 1850 came to an end after four numbers. It is important chiefly because it contained the earliest version of *The Blessed Damozel*.

Rossetti (1828-82). Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the son of an Italian patriot who came to England as a refugee in 1824. He was educated at King's College, London but soon devoted himself to painting. He began writing poetry very early, his *Blessed Damozel* and other poems first appearing in *The Germ* (1850). He married in 1860, but his wife, a great beauty, died two years after marriage. He was so shocked that he buried his manuscript poems with her. These were disinterred seven years later at the persuasion of friends and were published in 1870.

In 1871, he was attacked by Robert Buchanan, a minor poet, under the pseudonym 'Thomas Maitland' in an article entitled 'The Fleshly School of Poetry'. To this Rossetti replied in 'The Stealthy School

of Criticism'. His second volumes of poems called *Ballads and Sonnets* was published in 1881, a year before his death. He also published a volume of translations from the early Italian, French and German poets.

The best introduction to Rossetti's poetry is *The Blessed Damozel*. Though his earliest poem (it was written at the age of eighteen), it embodies not only many of his own individual and characteristic qualities, but also the chief qualities of the School he headed.

'The blessed damozel' is a maiden who after death has become one of God's choristers. Her lover is still living and pining for her. She leans from the gold bar of the rampart of God's palace in Heaven which spans like a bridge the void of space below. Looking down from that vast height she surveys the world and sees souls mounting up to God 'like thin flames'. She speaks her longing to be united with her lover who hears her—even feels her bending over him. Their united prayers, she believes, will surely be granted; when in due course he comes up to heaven she will unashamedly declare their love to Virgin Mary who will herself lead them to Christ. The damozel will then beg Him to unite them forever, so that they might live together in Heaven, as for a while, they had lived on earth—

The blesse'd damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

The lover's comment—

(To one, ten years of years.
...Yet now, and in this place
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face...
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

So much for the physical charms of the lady. Now the spiritual environments of Heaven—

"We two" will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two" will lie in the shadow of
That living mystic tree,
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His name audibly.

"We two", she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys "

The gold bar of heaven from which she is leaning and which has been made warm by her bosom, her loose robe, her hair yellow like ripe corn and decorated with seven stars, three lilies in her hand—these are examples of the naive delight Rossetti took in piling up minute details to fill his picture. The same painstaking attention to concrete details is shown in his picture of heaven: God's shrine with its lamps that are continually stirred by prayers, the mystic tree of life whose leaves articulate the name of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Ghost himself invested with plumes, Virgin Mary's handmaidens with their sweet names, bound locks and garlanded foreheads, weaving the golden thread into the fine cloth white like flame for the new comers to heaven.

The poem startles the reader by the odd mingling of the sensual and the spiritual. It is, nevertheless, a triumphant success, not of course, as a religious poem, but as a creation of beauty—pictorial beauty. Rossetti was a true descendant of Keats and *The Blessed Damozel* is a worthy companion of *The Eve of St. Agnes*. He was a professional painter and the predominance of pictorial element in his poetry was quite natural, but this quality was common to the whole pre-Raphaelite school. Also common to that school and to him was the quality of sincerity that marked *The Blessed Damozel*. This is reflected in the simplicity of its diction and style. There is nothing pretentious or conventional about it. And yet its very simplicity strikes an individual note. The stanzas, simple and uniform in structure, have a soft music which is adequate to the theme. In short, this poem brought a new, distinctive, and refreshing accent into English poetry.

If *The Blessed Damozel* does not succeed as a religious poem, it is not because it is insincere, but because the poet's vision so real to

him, so individual and personal, is incomprehensible to the average reader. The explanation of this puzzle of Rossetti's poetry is to be found in his prose story *Hand and Soul* which first appeared in *The Germ* and was later incorporated in the 1870 volume. Chiaro, an early Italian painter, attained fame first with his devotional and then with his moral paintings, but he was still dissatisfied with himself. Then the realisation dawned on him that his faith and fame had both failed him because he had separated love and faith. God's love and his own love, he realised, are one and the same. Perfect love is faith, for the heart must believe first. Why should he think that the portrayal of his love, being earthy, is unworthy and unacceptable to God, or that the portraits of madonnas and saints will be more pleasing to Him? What need has God for man's support? When at any time hath he cried unto thee saying, "My son, lend me thy shoulder, for I fall?" Chiaro's soul finally sums up the whole ethic of art, thus, "Give thou to God no more than he asketh of thee; but to man also, that which is man's."

The secret, then, of Rossetti's *mystique* is identification of physical love and spiritual love. He abolishes the distinction between matter and spirit. They merge one into the other. That the sexual relationship between man and woman is one of the most profound and mysterious of human experiences admits of little doubt. To recognise this, however, is one thing, but to make it a cult is quite another. Rossetti's love of Love and Beauty was almost a mania. While *The Blessed Damozel* is the simplest expression of his love mysticism, his later poems are hopelessly obscure, for in them the identification of the sensuous and the spiritual is carried to extremes. Poems like *Love's Nocturn*, *The Stream's Secret* and many of the sonnets of *The House of Life* are in the nature of picture puzzles, and each takes hours to explore. Wearied and bemused the reader turns away from the impossible conceits. But the picture remains in the mind as a hazy memory.

The esoteric nature of Rossetti's poetry has limited his appeal to a special and select audience. But he wrote poetry of many kinds, and some of these, especially sonnets, songs, and ballads possess greater human interest and popular appeal.

Sonnets. In his mastery of the sonnet Rossetti ranks with Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Mrs. Browning. His Sonnet-sequence *The House of Life* in which he expresses his love for his wife is second only to Shakespeare's in both quantity and quality. Together they form a shrine of love in which Rossetti's worship of that deity is seen at its best. They are fascinating even when we cannot follow him through all the mazes of his sacramental dreamings. Besides this sequence there are 'sonnets for pictures' as well as others including the one 'On Refusal of Aid Between Nations'. In this he bewails the divisiveness and selfishness of man who if not affected himself, refuses aid against aggression. There are also some beautiful songs in the first volume.

Ballads. The shorter ballads *Troy Town*, *Eden Bower* and *Sister*

Helen of the first volume, and the longer *Rose Mary*, *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy* of the second volume form a separate group.

Troy Town recalls the familiar love story of Helen and Paris and in its refrain its disastrous result. The poem is remarkable for the frank sensuality of its picture of Helen—

Heavenborn Helen, Sparta's queen, (O Troy Town!)
 Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
 The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
 All love's lordship lay between (O Troy's down, Tall Troy's on fire!)

Helen bares her breast before Venus of whom she asks the boon of a deserving lover, and says—

Each twin breast is an apple sweet (O Troy Town!)
 Once an apple stirred the beat
 Of thy heart with the heart's desire—
 Say, who brought it then to thy feet? (O Troy's down, Tall Troy's on fire!)
 Mine are apples grown to the south, (O Troy Town!)
 Grown to taste in the days of drouth,
 Taste and waste to the heart's desire:
 Mine are apples meet for his mouth

Eden Bower. In Jewish mythology, Lilith (which means a vampire or night-monster) was the first wife of Adam, and was ousted by Eve. In this poem, Lilith persuades Satan (in the form of Snake) to lend her his shape for the temptation of Eve. In return for this she promises him her love. The sensuality of this poem associated as it is with a snake and a monster is repelling.

Sister Helen. This poem tells in a dramatic form the story of a woman who kills her lover by melting his waxen image. Her younger brother reports the arrival on horseback of three emissaries including the lover's father. They plead for forgiveness in vain, and the man dies on the third day.

Rose Mary. This is another story of medieval magic and superstition. Rose Mary looking into a magic beryl, which reveals the truth only to the pure, sees that her lover is in grave peril and warns him. She being a sinner, the truth is concealed from her, for her lover is false and is killed. She breaks the beryl with a sword, thus releasing the evil spirits hidden in it. Her soul is saved.

The White Ship, November 25, 1125. Berold, the butcher of Rouen, tells the story of the sinking of the White Ship in which Prince William, son of Henry I, was returning with his sister from France. The ship ran on a sunken reef and was wrecked. The Prince was put in a boat along with some of his friends who happened to be near him, and might have been saved, but hearing the screams of his sister he returned to the ship, whereupon so many panicky passengers leaped into the boat that it capsized.

The tone of the poem is light-hearted showing the general dislike of the people for Henry I. The Prince too was a scamp, but he redeemed his character by his one act of heroism—

The Prince that was and the King to come,
There in an instant gone to his doom,

Despite of all England's bended knee
And maugre the Norman fealty

He was a Prince of lust and pride;
He showed no grace till the hour he died.

When he should be king, he oft would vow,
He'd yoke the peasant to his own plough.
O'er him the ships score their furrows now.

God only knows where his soul did wake
But I saw him die for his sister's sake.

The King's Tragedy. The story of the murder of James I, King of Scotland (1394-1437), is told by Catherine Douglas, one of the queen's women. Since his elder brother was starved to death by his uncle Robert, Duke of Albany, James on becoming King took vengeance on the Albanys and had his cousins executed. This was resented by some lawless people and Sir Robert Graham formed a plot against his life. One night he and his accomplices suddenly entered the Abbey of the Black Friars at Perth where the King was staying. James removed some planks from the floor and took shelter in a vault below, while Catherine Douglas barred the door with her arm. All was in vain. The vault was discovered and Graham murdered him. (Perth was the capital of Scotland at that time.) James had been kept a prisoner in England for nineteen years. There he was well educated and married Lady Jane Beaufort, grand-daughter of John of Gaunt. He wrote poetry, his chief poem being *The King's Quair*. (See *Supra*. . . Scottish Chaucerians.)

✓ **Christina Rossetti** (1830-94). Christina Georgina Rossetti, the painter-poet's sister, was almost as great a poet as her brother. A devoted adherent of the Church of England, she was intensely religious and rejected two offers of marriage on religious grounds. One of the suitors was a Catholic; the other's religious views were heterodox. After the death of her father in 1854, she passed the rest of her life in London with her mother. She lived a secluded life devoting herself to religious exercises and works of charity. Her first published verses appeared together with her brother's in *The Germ* (1850). She wrote incessantly right to the end, though the quantity of her verse is not very large. Her published volumes include: *Goblin Market and other Poems* (1862), *The Prince's Progress and other Poems* (1866), *The Pageant and other Poems* (1881), *Verses* (1890) and *New Poems* (1896), a posthumous collection. She was a skilled sonnet-writer and wrote a sonnet sequence called *Monna Innominata*. The sonnets are autobiographical and show a deep sense of loss resulting from her two attachments, especially the second.

Goblin Market is a fantastic tale with allegorical meaning. The goblins offer enchanting fruits in a mossy glen, and morning and evening Laura and Lizzy hear their cry "Come, buy our orchard fruits/Come, buy, buy." In spite of Lizzy's warnings Laura is tempted, and having no money buys the goblin fruits with a golden curl of her hair and eats them to her fill. She longs for more, but the goblins are nowhere to be found, though Lizzy continues to hear their cry. Sick with yearning, Laura dwindles and is at death's door.

The compassionate Lizzy goes to the glen and flinging to the goblins a silver penny demands their fruits. The goblins invite her to eat with them which she refuses to do. The goblins thereupon beat her up, pull her hair and tear her gown. Holding her hands they force the fruit against her mouth, but she keeps her lips tightly closed and the fruit juice runs down her face and neck. Lizzy bears this ill-treatment without uttering a word. Worn out by her resistance, the goblins fling her back the penny, kick their fruit baskets and plates and vanish. Lizzy returns home and asks Laura to kiss her. As she kisses Lizzy's juice-smeared face, her lips are scorched and fire seems to burn in her body. She writhes and wriggles as in a fit and hovering between life and death, she is watched and nursed the whole night by Lizzy. Early next morning she recovers completely and is her old self again. She expresses her gratitude to Lizzy, who for her sake had resisted the temptation and won the fiery antidote.

The fruits in the story are worldly pleasures; Laura falls for them and is nearly ruined. Lizzy resists the temptation and by her sacrifice redeems her sister's sin. In a larger sense, the story can be regarded as representing the redemption of man by vicarious sacrifice like Christ's.

Here is the rich description of the goblin fruit with which the poem begins—

Morning and evening
 Maids heard the goblins cry:
 'Come buy our orchard fruits,
 Come buy, come buy:
 Apples and quinces
 Lemons and oranges,
 Plump unpecked cherries,
 Melons and raspberries,
 Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
 Swart-headed mulberries,
 Wild free-born cranberries,
 Crab-apples, dewberries,
 Pine-apples, blackberries,
 Apricots, strawberries;
 All ripe together
 In summer weather—
 Morns that pass by
 Fair eves that fly;
 Come buy, Come by
 Our grapes fresh from the vine,

Pomegranates full and fine,
 Dates and sharps bullaces,
 Rare pears and greengages,
 Damsons and bilberries,
 Taste them and try:
 Currants and gooseberries,
 Bright-fire-like barberries,
 Figs to fill your mouth,
 Citrons from the South,
 Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
 Come buy, Come buy'.

When Lizzy refuses to eat the fruits, the goblins are annoyed and set upon her—

They began to scratch their pates,
 No longer wagging, purring,
 But visibly demurring,
 Grunting and snarling.
 One called her proud.
 Cross-grained, uncivil;
 Their tones waxed loud,
 Their looks were evil.
 Lashing their tails,
 They trod and hustled her,
 Elbowed and jostled her,
 Clawed with their nails,
 Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking
 Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
 Twitched her hair by the roots,
 Stamped upon her tender feet,
 Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
 Against her mouth to make her eat.

Lizzy resists the temptations and by her vicarious sacrifice (through renunciation) redeems Laura's weakness.

The Prince's Progress is also an allegorical fairy tale. The princess waits in her tower for the coming of her lover. The Prince sets out to claim his bride, but loiters on the way, yielding to various temptations. When he arrives at last, he is too late for the bride is dead. Here is a stanza from the 'Bride-Song' in the tale—

Too late for love, too late for joy,
 Too late, too late!
 You loitered on the road too long,
 You trifled at the gate:
 The enchanted dove upon her branch,
 Died without a mate;
 The enchanted princess in her tower,
 Slept, died, behind the grate,
 Her heart was starving all the while
 You made it wait.

The allegory is too plain to need any comment.

The poetry of Christina Rossetti possesses most of the characteris-

tics of the pre-Raphaelite poets, but she differs from them in one important respect. Rossetti and Morris were indifferently religious, their attraction to religion being merely artistic, and Swinburne was definitely irreligious. Christina, on the other hand, was a devout Christian. Religion dominated her life and it dominates her poetry. Death and eternity run like a refrain through most of her poems. This preoccupation with death smacks a little of morbidity which strangely enough marks the most important members of the Pre-Raphaelite school—Rossetti, Morris, Swinburne—though its cause in them was their obsession with love and beauty. Not that Christina was insensitive to beauty. She had withdrawn from the world because she regarded its attractions as vanities. But she was no bloodless anchorite in whom all capacity for enjoyment had withered. She shared to the full the pre-Raphaelites' perception of sensuous beauty. In her native gift of song she found an outlet not only for her ascetic passion but also for her passion for physical beauty. What she denied herself in actual life she found in the dream-land of her song. The pictures of the visible world—of Nature, of art—she draws are intensely realistic in their simple, vivid, and concentrated imagery.

Deep feeling expressed in quiet, controlled, and cadenced speech is the most pleasing as well as the most characteristic of her qualities as a poet. Quiet speech is a rare virtue and in woman it is the rarest. Christina's quiet manner gives her poetry a vitality which a more forceful one could not have achieved. She followed her own natural instincts and escaped the usual temptation of women-writers to imitate 'masculinity'. Her poetic production is slender, but it is first-rate. Her simplicity, spontaneity, sincerity, and above all, her bird-like singing give her poems a grace and charm all her own. No wonder in the opinion of competent critics she disputes with Mrs. Browning the title of the greatest of English poetesses.

William Morris (1834-96), son of a wealthy merchant, was educated at Oxford where he founded and conducted for a year *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), in which were published some of his earliest poems. He came under the spell of Newman and the Tractarian movement and intended to take orders as a High churchman, but gave up the idea after a visit to France with his artist friend Burne-Jones. He started as an architect, but turned to painting under the influence of Rossetti whose *Blessed Damozel* and *The Hand and the Soul* had made on him a profound impression. In 1861, he became a partner in a house decoration firm of which after a few years he became the sole proprietor. He also founded the Kelmscott Press in which he printed de-luxe editions of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Shelley, etc. From 1883 onward his chief activities were designing for his firm and working on behalf of the Socialist movement. He wrote poetry as a relaxation from a hard day's work as a professional craftsman. His poetical works are: *The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems* (1858), *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), *Love is Enough* (1872), *Sigurd the Volsung* (1877), *Poems by the Way* (1891). Besides these

must be mentioned his verse translations of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1875) and Homer's *Odyssey* (1887).

Brief Notices

The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems. The title poem is most disappointing. In his attempt to make the poem dramatic he makes Guenevere's speech too halting, too abrupt, for coherent defence. It is not melodious either and sounds like prose. To the assembled Knights, her judges, she relates how she and Launcelot had met one morning in the garden and kissed. She had invited him to her chamber just for one night to listen to his conversation. Nothing sinful happened when there was bawling outside and throwing of stones which made her faint. Launcelot took her in his arms and was soothing her when they were surprised by Gawaine and his fellows. 'All I have said is truth by Christ's dear tears'. Her tale ends at the arrival of Launcelot on a roan charger.

King Arthur's Tomb. This tells of Guenevere's last meeting with Launcelot at the tomb of Arthur at Glastonbury. There are echoes of Rossetti in this poem, as for example in the queen's prayer to Christ for forgiveness—

If even I go to hell, I cannot choose
But love you, Christ, yea, though I cannot keep
From loving Launcelot; O Christ! must I lose
My own heart's love? see, though I cannot weep
Yet am very sorry for my sin

There are two other Arthurian poems in this collection: *Sir Galahad* and *The Chapel at Lyonesse*.

Of the remaining poems the more notable are *Sir Peter Harpdon's End*, *Rapunzel*, *The Haystack in the Floods*, *Welland River* and *Summer Dawn*.

Sir Peter Harpdon's End. This is a dramatic poem depicting an episode during the English struggles in France in the reign of Edward III. Of the two French Knights in the episode Sir Peter is in the English service holding English castle in Poitiers and Sir Lambert, his cousin, is fighting on the French side. Lambert coming to see Peter in order to dissuade him from continuing on the English side, calls him a traitor to the French cause. Peter, enraged, has his ears cut off. Later, when the English castle falls, Sir Peter is captured and executed.

Rapunzel. This is a medieval story of magic, mystery and superstition. Rapunzel was the name of a witch who had imprisoned Guendolen, a beautiful maiden with long golden hair, in a lonely tower. The witches trod upon her hair in the witches' sabbaths and delighted to swing on to its ends like bats. Prince Sebald having heard a minstrel's song about Guendolen wanders a whole year in his quest until he comes to the tower and rescues the lady of his dreams. The jealous witch cries out of hell: 'Guendolen! Guendolen! one lock of hair!'

The Haystack in the Floods. Another episode of the English assault on Poitiers. Sir Robert, an English Knight, is taken prisoner along with his six men by a French Knight Godmar. On their way to the Gascon frontier, Sir Robert is bound and Godmar threatens to slay him unless Jehane his lady who accompanies him consents to be his paramour. The lady refusing, Godmar cuts off Robert's head near a soaked haystack.

Summer Dawn. This a charming lyric testifying to Morris's love of Nature and to his voluptuous delight in pictorial detail. Being very short, it may be quoted in full—

Summer Dawn

Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips
Faint and gray 'twixt the leaves of the aspen,
betwixt the cloud-bars,

That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
That heavy elms wait, and restless and cold

The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

The Life and Death of Jason. The Greek story of Jason, the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece, is familiar enough. Its treatment by Morris on an epic scale (in 17 books) makes it one of the greatest narrative tales in English verse. Pelias had ousted his brother Aeson from the throne of Iolcos in Thessaly. Aeson sent his son Jason for safety and training to the centaur Chiron. When Jason reached man's estate, he was prompted by Juno to go back to Iolcos and claim his father's throne. He boldly made the claim and Pelias to get rid of him promised to restore the kingdom on condition that he would first recover the golden fleece. He then told him the story of the fleece which is as follows.

Athamas, king of Thebes, had two children by Nephele: Phryxus and Helle. Then he abandoned Nephele in favour of Ino who conceived a bitter hatred of Nephele's children. To destroy them she hatched an ingenious plan. She bribed the peasant women to boil the seed corn so that when sown it yielded no crop. The people crying against this famine, the king consulted the priests. They too being bribed told the King that Diana was very angry with Nephele for having broken her vow of celibacy and wedding Athamas, and that the goddess would be appeased only if Nephele would give up her children for sacrifice. Thereupon the children were imprisoned. Now near their prison was a court in which was kept a mighty ram,

the gift of Neptune to Athamas. Its fleece was golden and it had two golden wings. The feeding of this beast had lately been entrusted to Nephele, who tended it so affectionately that it grew very friendly to her. On the morning of the day fixed for sacrifice, she loosed the ram and leading it to a little wood near the gates of Diana's temple hid herself there. At noon when the procession came up she slipped the ram who dashed into it and scattered the crowd. Phryxus seeing this deliverer with outstretched wings sprang upon its back and drew his sister behind him. The ram rose high in the air and flew east. Helle becoming giddy fell into the part of the sea which in her memory is called Hellespont. Phryxus landed at Colchis and was hospitably received by Aetes, the king. Phryxus sacrificed the ram to Zeus and hung up its fleece in his room. Aetes treacherously killed Phryxus and took the fleece.

Jason vowed the quest and embarked in the *Argo* along with some fifty heroes drawn from all parts of Greece. These included Theseus, Hercules, and the singer Orpheus. Hercules and his page Hylas went ashore on the Mysian coast and never returned. Hylas was drawn into a river by the water-nymphs who became enamoured of his beauty. Hercules wandered about seeking him. The Argonauts pursued their way and after many adventures, including the hazardous passage through Symplegades or the clashing rocks (Scylla and Charybdis on the opposite sides of the straits of Messina), they reached Colchis and were hospitably received by Aetes. Jason demanded the golden fleece and the king consented to surrender it on the condition that he perform the seemingly impossible tasks of taming the brazen bulls and sowing a dragon's teeth. The king's daughter having fallen in love with him helps him secretly with her magic arts. She gives him a potion with which to anoint his body before approaching the fire-spouting bulls, and a crystal ball. Following her instructions he easily yoked the bulls, tilled the field called Mar's Acre and broadcast the dragon's teeth. Soon an army of armed men (the Earth-born) rose from the field and turned their furious glare on Jason. Jason threw the ball in the crowd. Becoming blind they fell to fighting among themselves and were all destroyed. Guided by Medea, Jason took the fleece and Argonauts escaped, killing Medea's brother Absyrtus who attempted to intercept them. On the way Medea visited the enchantress Circe, her aunt (Aetes's sister) from whom she received good counsel. The sirens tried to tempt the heroes with their beautiful songs, but they steered clear of them, losing only one companion. Passing by the garden of the Hesperides they reached their homeland. The *Argo* lay in ambush and Medea went to Iolcos in disguise. By telling a hard-luck story she gained admission to the king's palace, and convinced Pelias's daughters that she could restore the King's youth. She had an old ram killed and boiled it in a brazen cauldron together with some magic herbs and it was turned into a lovely little lamb. Promising the same miraculous transformation for Pelias she asked the girls to go and kill him. As soon as they had killed him she gave the appointed signal and the Argonauts entered the city. The people

welcomed Jason as their king. After some time Jason deserted Medea in favour of Glaucus, daughter of Creon, king of Corinth. Medea broken hearted and despairing wrote Jason a farewell letter and sent with it her most precious dress as a wedding present to the new bride. She warned, however, that the dress should on no account be exposed to the sun. On the wedding day Glaucus clad herself in Medea's garment and over it wore a gold cloak. While waiting with Creon on the dais of the royal hall for Jason's arrival, she fumbled with the clasp of the cloak thus exposing a part of the inner dress to the sun. It caught fire and she and her father were reduced to ashes. Jason died in the shade of the *Argo*. Medea left Iolcos and made her way to Athens.

The poem is in heroic couplets. Interspersed in it are many songs and lyrics. The best is that sung by the river-nymph to Hylas.

The Nymph's Song to Hylas

I know a little garden-close
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.

And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillar'd house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God,
Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before!

There comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea;
The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.

For which I cry both day and night,
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskill'd to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.

Yet tottering as I am, and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death
An entrance to that happy place;
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kiss'd, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

The Earthly Paradise. This, generally considered Morris's masterpiece, consists of a Prologue and twenty-four tales in Chaucer's metres viz., heroic couplet, octosyllabic couplet and rhyme royal.

The Prologue ('The Wanderers'), tells us how a roving company

of Vikings embark upon a voyage in search of the fabled Earthly Paradise and after many years' wanderings reach a nameless city inhabited by survivors of the ancient Greek civilisation. They are hospitably received and there they settle down. The two groups meet twice a month at a feast when they tell tales, the Greeks telling tales on classical subjects and the wanderers on Norse subjects. Only one tale is told on each occasion alternately by one of the hosts and one of the wanderers. The tales are linked up by lyrics descriptive of the English landscape in different months of the year.

In the epilogue Morris explains his intention in writing the tales. It was to bring back to folk weary of smoke and steam some of the "fragrance of old days and deeds." In the 'Apology' prefacing the poem he describes himself as "the idle singer of an empty day."

Of Heaven and Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears
Or hope again for ought that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Of the tales the best is the Norse tale of *The Lovers of Gudrun* which is a translation of the *Laxdaela* saga (a Norse word meaning story). Gudrun, daughter of a chief in Iceland, has many lovers including Kiartan and his intimate friend and cousin Bodli. Gudrun returns Kiartan's love, but he wants to achieve fame before marrying her. So he accompanied by Bodli goes to Norway and stays for some years at the court of King Olaf. Bodli returns and tells Gudrun that Kiartan loves Olaf's sister and means to marry her. The broken-hearted Gudrun believing this story marries Bodli. Kiartan returns to marry Gudrun. Gudrun curses the treacherous Bodli and Kiartan, though furious, spares his life. Goaded by the taunts of the people about him, Bodli joins in a plot against Kiartan's life and slays him. Later he himself is slain by Kiartan's brothers. Gudrun marries again.

Love is Enough is the least interesting of Morris's works, being remarkable for its experiments in the difficult middle English metres rather than for its subject.

Sigurd the Volsung. This, considered Morris's most ambitious work, has nevertheless very limited appeal. It can interest only those Englishmen who like Morris are proud of their ancestral Germanic traditions. The epic is in four books. Myth, legend and towards

the end, history, are all mixed up to make a story replete with horror. Revenge, murders, suicides, treachery, incest, gods, fairies, and serpents—these combine to make it nightmarish. Attila, the Hun, is introduced in the last book. The plot is much too complicated for an intelligible summary.

Poems by the Way. This a collection of lyrics and ballads previously unpublished and in general is of the same quality as his first volume.

Though strongly influenced by Rossetti, Morris excelled his master in both bulk and popularity. Indeed no other pre-Raphaelite poet approaches him in these respects. While Rossetti's medievalism was drawn from Italian sources—Dante and his fore-runners and contemporaries—Morris drew his poems from purely English or Scandinavian sources. The medieval England, he fancied most, was the 14th century—the period of Chaucer, Malory, Froissart. In his Scandinavian or Germanic tales he travelled further back into the fifth century. His intense love of the past included as well classical Greece. His imagination habitually dwelt in the Golden Age and this for him had existed in the remote past. "My work", he said, "is the embodiment of dreams—to bring before men's eyes the image of the thing my heart is filled with." And the thing which filled his heart was the beauty of the simple life of the earlier ages. His poetry is accordingly a succession of pictures of the past glowing with romance. His tales have all the elements of romance—love and adventure, magic and mystery, and beauties of Nature—but the romantic vision that haunted him most and to which he returned again and again was that of the ideal life of peaceful simplicity—

In those old simple days, before men went
To gather unseen harm and discontent
Along with all the alien merchandise
That rich folk need too restless to be wise.

This is from *The Love of Alcestis*. The passage is too long for further quotation, but must be read for fuller appreciation of Morris's idealism. Further down in the same tale is a description of the peaceful and contented life of Admetus—

In all things grew his wisdom and his wealth
And folk beholding the fair state and health
Wherein his land was, said, that now at last
A fragment of the Golden Age was cast
Over the place, for there was no debate,
And men forgot the very name of hate.

Jason exhorting the weary Argonauts on the return voyage paints a similar picture of earthly paradise waiting for them at home—

Fair is the wind, the sunny dawn is clear,
Nor are we bound for Pluto's kingdom drear,

But for fair forests, plentiful of beasts,
 Where innocent of craft, with joyous feasts
 The wise folk live as in the golden age,
 Not reddening spears and swords in useless rage,
 Nor need they houses, but in fair-wrought cave
 Their bodies from the winter's cold they save
 Nor labour they at all, or weave, or till,
 For everything the kind land bears at will,
 Doubt not all that they will welcome us
 As very Gods, with all things plenteous.

(Bock X)

His pictures of female charms and of scenic beauty can be as voluptuous and as copious in detail as those of Keats or Rossetti. Like them also he can be as unrestrained in his love scenes. It is hardly necessary to quote examples, for this kind of ornamentation is kept up throughout the tales. One chosen at random may, however, be given. Jason looks awe-struck at the goddess Juno—

So, doubtful he held back, nor dared to love
 Her rosy feet, or ivory knees above,
 And with half-lifted eyes, could scarcely dare
 To gaze upon her eyes or golden hair,
 Or hidden bosom. . . .

For a scene of passionate love, that between Hylas and the nymph (in *Jason*) is reminiscent of *Don Juan*. It is too long to be quoted in full. For a taste only a few lines should suffice—

Therewith he reached his hand to her, and she
 Let her slim palm fall in it daintily;
 But with that touch he felt as through his blood
 Strange fire ran, and saw not the close wood,
 Nor tangled path, nor stream, nor aught but her
 Crouching before him in her gold and fur,
 With kind appealing eyes raised up to his,
 And red lips trembling for the coming kiss.

As for the beauties of Nature, the rose garden, the apple orchard, the fair streams, and the warbling brown bird are almost a convention with Morris, broken or swamped rather only in the case of the more extensive scenes, such for example as Circe's garden or the Garden of the Hesperides.

A lover and singer of sensuous beauty he cared little to preach. All that can be gathered from his poems is that he was impressed with the beauty and joy of life as well as with its evanescence. He hated the ugliness of modern industrial civilisation and like Ruskin did all he could to beautify every side of life. It was his aestheticism that made him a socialist. He opposed capitalism because it bred ugliness and poverty. He realized that until and unless these were removed it was idle to expect people to appreciate the beauty of living.

Morris was first and last a craftsman—architect, dyer, printer, designer, interior decorator, etc., and his chief accomplishment was

in the field of decorative arts. He had the soul of an artist for whom poetry was only one of the many ways of expressing his inborn sense of beauty. His well-known sayings that 'talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense; it is a mere matter of craftsmanship' and that 'if a chap cant compose an epic while he is weaving tapestry, he had better shut up' are significant. A man who equates poetry with dyeing, printing or weaving cannot be expected to produce great poetry.

Morris was a competent poet, not a great one. His lyrics are artificial; they have neither the fire nor the melody of poetry. His title to fame as poet rests upon the longer narrative poems *Jason* and the *Earthly Paradise*. The quaintness of his style with such archaisms as gat (got), stead (place), rede (advise), eld (old age) etc.—is perhaps too obvious, but on the whole not unpleasing. Though he regarded Chaucer as his master and is quite Chaucerian in the easy flow of his verse, he has neither the humour nor the realism of Chaucer. His tales are pervaded by an atmosphere of dreamy sadness.

Swinburne (1837-1909). Algernon Charles Swinburne, son of admiral Swinburne, was educated at Eton and Oxford. Having failed in Scripture he left the university without a degree. In 1860, he published a volume containing two romantic plays *Queen Mother* and *Rosamond*, dedicated to Rossetti, which attracted little attention. After travelling in Italy he settled in London, living for sometime with Rossetti, Morris and Meredith. In 1865, he published *Atalanta in Calydon* which at once placed him in the front rank of Victorian poets. In 1866, appeared *Poems and Ballads* which roused a storm of criticism on the score of immorality. Swinburne was a prolific writer in both verse and prose, his poems and dramas alone filling eleven volumes. Of about a dozen dramas the most notable are *Atalanta in Calydon*, *Erechtheus*, the trilogy on Mary Queen of Scots consisting of *Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, and *Mary Stuart*, and *Lochrine*. The first two are on the Greek model, the others romantic. The most important of his volumes of poetry are *Poems and Ballads* (1866), *Poems and Ballads*, second series (1878), *Poems and Ballads*, third series (1889), *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) and *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882). His important prose works consist of critical studies of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists as well as of the more modern authors like Blake, the Brontes, Dickens. He also wrote articles on Congreve, Keats, Landor, and Victor Hugo for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

During the last thirty years of his life, from 1879 till his death in 1909, he was the house-mate of his intimate friend Theodore Watts Dunton at the Pines, Putney Hill, in the suburbs of London. Like Byron, Swinburne was an aristocrat with comfortable means and did not engage in any occupation or profession. He did not marry, had no responsibilities and could afford to devote himself entirely to literature. He had immense scholarship, being a master of Greek, French and Italian. He was the greatest living poet after the death of Tennyson, but was passed over for poet-laureateship because of

his revolutionary ideas on religion and politics. *The Poems and Ballads* of 1866 gave rise to all kinds of rumours about his morals, but barring a few youthful escapades, natural to a passionate and excitable temper, Swinburne's life was decent and respectable. In his aristocratic disregard of public opinion he recalls Byron, and was perhaps more culpable in his lapses of taste than that famous (or infamous?) voluptuary.

Atalanta in Calydon. In Greek mythology, Meleager was the son of Oeneus, King of Calydon, and his wife Althaea. At his birth the three Fates appeared and prophesied that he would have great strength, the good fortune, but would live only as long as the brand that was in the fire would remain unconsumed. Althaea, thereupon, snatched the brand from the fire and carefully preserved it. When Meleager grew up he sailed with Jason in quest of the golden fleece and won great renown. He also scattered the army of his enemies from the north when they invaded the land. Then Artemis (Diana) who had incited the northern tribes against Oeneus, because he had sacrificed to all the gods save her, was still more furious at the destruction of this army, and sent a wild boar to ravage Calydon. Heroes from all Greece assembled including Atalanta, the virgin huntress from Arcadia renowned for swift running. As she was a votary of Artemis, the goddess favoured her and she was accordingly the first to wound the boar, Meleager despatching the beast afterwards. Meleager, being enamoured of Atalanta, gave her the head of the boar as spoil of the hunt. Meleager's uncles (his mother's brothers Toxus and Plexippus) considering this an act of partiality tried to seize the prize from Atalanta, and thereupon Meleager killed them. When Althaea learnt that her brothers had been killed by her son, she was so infuriated that she plunged the brand into the fire, and as it wasted away, so his life likewise wasted away. As soon as the brand was consumed Meleager died. Althaea too not long after died of sorrow.

The play is generally regarded as Swinburne's masterpiece and is deservedly popular because of its enchanting choruses. Though Greek in form with its classical furniture of gods and goddesses, chorus and semi-chorus etc., the play is hardly Greek in spirit. The choruses are characterised by an excessive exuberance of romantic verbosity which is in marked contrast to Greek severity. The language used in the arraignment of 'The Supreme Evil, God' is too harsh for the mouth of any Greek. And who could believe a Greek prince capable of using such outrageous language to his mother as the following of Meleager to Althaea?

.....thou, I say,
Althaea, since my father's ploughshare, drawn
Through fatal seedland of a female field,
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb.....

Swinburne was the very antithesis of Greek simplicity and restraint, and the play is a curious mixture of incompatibles, of the mingling of Hellenism and romanticism. In his neo-pagan treatment of a Greek theme he has given it a twist to suit his own views and tastes. What was to come in the *Poems and Ballads* of 1866 was foreshadowed in the sensual suggestions of this play, in such for example as those in Meleager's wish for Atalanta to stretch herself on his prostrate body, 'and touch hands with hands and lips with lips'. All this, however, passed unnoticed behind the screen of the antique form and more specially because of the haunting and resonant music of the Chorus.

Chorus—

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces;
 The mother of months in meadow or plain
 Fills the shadows and windy places
 With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
 And the brown bright nightingale amorous
 Is half assuaged for Itylus,
 For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
 The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.
 For winter's rains and ruins are over,
 And all the season of snows and sins;
 The days dividing lover and lover,
 The light that loses, the night that wins;
 And time remember'd is grief forgotten,
 And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
 And in green underwood and cover
 Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

Chorus—

Before the beginning of years
 There came to the making of man
 Time, with a gift of tears;
 Grief, with a glass that ran;
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
 Summer, with flowers that fell;
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,
 And madness risen from hell;
 Strength without hands to smite;
 Love that endures for a breath;
 Night, the shadow of light,
 And life, the shadow of death.
 And the high gods took in hand
 Fire, and the falling of tears,
 And a measure of sliding sand
 From under the feet of the years;
 And froth and drift of the sea;
 And dust of the labouring earth;
 And bodies of things to be
 In the houses of death and of birth;
 And wrought with weeping and laughter,
 And fashioned with loathing and love,
 With life before and after,
 And death beneath and above,
 For a day and a night and a morrow,
 That his strength might endure for a span,

With travail and heavy sorrow,
 The holy spirit of man.
 From the winds of the north and the south
 They gathered as unto strife;
 They breathed upon his mouth,
 They filled his body with life;
 Eyesight and speech they wrought
 For the veils of the soul therein,
 A time for labour and thought,
 A time to serve and to sin.
 They gave him light in his ways,
 And love, and a space for delight,
 And beauty and length of days,
 And night, and sleep in the night.
 His speech is a burning fire;
 With his lips he travaileth;
 In his heart is a blind desire,
 In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
 He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
 Sows, and he shall not reap;
 His life is a watch or a vision
 Between a sleep and a sleep.

(From *Atalanta in Calydon*)

Erechtheus (1876). Erechtheus was a mythical king of Athens. In a war against the Eleusinians and their Thracian ally Eumolpus, son of Poseidon, (lord of the sea, Roman Neptune) he was advised by the Delphic oracle that in order to be victorious he must sacrifice one of his daughters, which he did. The Eleusinians were defeated, but Poseidon in anger destroyed Erechtheus and all his house.

This play comes nearer to Greek tragedy in unity and concentration as well as in spirit than *Atalanta*. Its choruses, however, are not so beautiful and it has never attained the same popularity.

Romantic Plays. Swinburne's romantic tragedies, like his classical tragedies, are closet-dramas, meant to be read rather than acted. He was too essentially lyrical to write successful plays. He only knew how to weave rhapsodies and these are no substitute for dramatic speech or action. Of the trilogy on Mary, queen of Scots, *Bothwell* is the longest and the most readable. It is interspersed with lyrics.

Lochrine. This is a legendry tragedy. Lochrine, a mythical king of Britain, loved Estrildis, a German maiden brought by Humber, king of the Huns, when he invaded the country. Estrildis became by Lochrine mother of a daughter, Sabrina. Lochrine's queen, Gwendolen, drowned Estrildis and Sabrina in the river Severn. The beautiful song of Estrildis is worth quoting—

Estrildis's song:

'Had I wist, quoth Spring to the swallow,
 That earth could forget me, kissed
 By summer and lured to follow
 Down ways that I know not, I,
 My heart would have waxed not high,
 Mid-March would have seen me die—
 Had I wist!

'Had I wist, O Spring, said the swallow,
That hope was a sunlit mist,
And the faint light heart of it hollow,
Thy woods had not known my wing—
It had failed ere thine did, Spring,
Had I wist'.

Poems

The Poems and Ballads of 1866 descended upon Victorian England like a bombshell. They shocked most people, as indeed they were meant to do. They were an audacious repudiation of the accepted Christian ideas of God, religion, and morality. The volume was severely censured by critics and reviewers; but it was hailed as a new Bible by 'arty' people and more specially by the younger generation. The students of Oxford chanted *Dolores* and *Faustine* in the streets, and danced to their intoxicating music even when some of them did not know what it was all about. The twin themes of Swinburne's poetry already foreshadowed in *Atalanta* were presented here, with studied naivete and unprecedented boldness. Love, not sentimental but sensual, was exalted above everything else including God; but it was not so much the pleasure of love as its pain that was dwelt upon with keen relish—the weariness, the boredom, the satiety of lust. 'Dolores', 'Our Lady of Pain' presents a perverted aspect of love—its sadistic and masochistic cruelty—

By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
By the lips intertwined and bitten
Till the foam has a savour of blood,
By the pulse as it rises and falters,
By the hands as they slacken and strain,
I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
Our Lady of Pain.

Swinburne's admirers have attempted to defend *Dolores* on the ground that it shows the disastrous consequences of lust and that as such it is an ethical poem. Such attempts, however, are too far-fetched to deceive anybody. If such pornography is ethical in its motive and effect it is surely a very round about way of inculcating morality.

Another well-known poem that glorifies lust is *Laus Veneris*. It relates to the legend of Taunhauser, a German minnesinger or lyrical poet of the 13th century. According to the legend, as he was riding by the Horselburg in Thuringia (a former province in East Germany) he saw a beautiful woman in whom he recognised Venus. She beckoned him into a cave where he dwelt for seven years in licentious revelry. Then, suddenly stricken with conscience he left the Horsel and went to Rome to seek the Pope's pardon. The Pope told him that it was as impossible for him to be forgiven as for his dry staff to grow and blossom. Taunhauser left in despair. Three days after the Pope's staff broke into blossom. He immediately sent for

Tauntnhauser, but he was nowhere to be found. He had gone back to Venus.

In Swinburne's version the most significant part of the story—the miraculous blossoming of the staff, symbolising God's forgiveness—is characteristically omitted because it did not suit his neo-pagan view of love thus expressed through the mouth of Tauntnhauser after he has returned to the cave of Venus—

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,
 And to my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear
 Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,
 Who hath my being between the hands of her—
 Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,
 As when she came out of the naked sea
 Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
 And as the inner flower of fire was she.
 Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
 Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
 And laughing, made her lips luxurious;
 Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south.
 Strange spice and flower, strange savour of crushed fruit,
 And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot
 For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,
 Charred frankincense and grated sandal root,
 And I forgot fear and all weary things,
 All ended prayers and perished thanksgiving,
 Feeling her face with all her eager hair
 Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings
 To the body and to the raiment, burning them;
 As after death I know that such-like flame
 Shall cleave to me forever; Yea, what care,
 Albeit I burn then having felt the same?
 Ah love, there is no better life than this;
 To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
 And afterward to be cast out of God's sight;
 Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss
 High up in barren heaven before his face
 As we twain in the heavy hearted place,
 Remembering love and all the dead delight,
 And all that time was sweet with for a space?
 For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
 Soul may divide from body, but not we
 One from another; I hold thee with my hand,
 I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,
 I seal myself upon thee with my might,
 Abiding always out of all men's sight
 Until God loosen over sea and land
 The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

If Swinburne's music made lust attractive, it also lent a similar fascination to his neo-pagan creed of human life, summed up in the last two stanzas of *The Garden of Proserpine*—

From too much love of living,
 From hope and fear set free,
 We thank with brief thanksgiving
 Whatever gods may be,

That no life lives for ever
 That dead men rise up never
 That even the weariest river
 Winds somewhere safe to sea.
 Then star nor sun shall waken,
 Nor any change of light:
 Nor sound of waters shaken,
 Nor any sound or sight:
 Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
 Nor days nor things diurnal;
 Only the sleep eternal
 In an eternal night.

This poem is pitched in a minor key and is more effective than the extravagant rhetoric of defiance in such lines as the following from *Anactoria* (supposed to be spoken by Sappho, the Greek lyric poetess of the 7th century B.C.)—

For who shall change with prayers of thanksgiving
 The mystery of the cruelty of things?
 Or say what God above all gods and years,
 With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,
 With lamentation from strange lands from graves
 Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouths of slaves,
 From prison, and from plunging prows of ships
 Through flame like foam of the sea's closing lips—
 With thwartings of strange signs, and wind blown hair
 Of comets desolating the dim air,
 When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,
 And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,
 Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings
 Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—
 With sorrow of labouring moons, and altering light
 And travail of the planets of the night,
 And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,
 Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven?
 Is not this incense bitterness, his meat
 Murder? his hidden face and iron feet
 Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
 Threaten and trample all things and every day?
 Hath he not sent us hunger? who hath cursed
 Spirit and flesh with longing? filled with thirst
 Their lips who cried unto him? who bade exceed
 The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,
 Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,
 Pain animate the dust of dead desire,
 And life yield up her flower to violent fate?
 Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
 Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
 And mix his immortality with death.
 Why hath he made us? What had all we done
 That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,
 And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,
 And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins?

This is simply absurd. But Swinburne had calmer moods when he could write little gems of aerial poetry such as the following—

A Match

If love were what the rose is,
 And I were like the leaf,
 Our lives would grow together
 In sad or singing weather,
 Blown fields or flowerful closes,
 Green pleasure or grey grief;
 If love were what the rose is,
 And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
 And love were like the tune,
 With double sound the single
 Delight our lips would mingle,
 With kisses glad as birds are
 That get sweet rain at noon;
 If I were what the words are,
 And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
 And I your love were death,
 We'd shine and snow together
 Ere March made sweet the weather
 With daffodil and starling
 And hours of fruitful breath;
 If you were life, my darling,
 And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
 And I were page to joy,
 We'd play for lives and seasons
 With loving looks and treasons
 And tears of night and morrow
 And laughs of maid and boy;
 If you were thrall to sorrow,
 And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
 And I were lord in May,
 We'd throw with leaves for hours
 And draw for days with flowers,
 Till day like night were shady
 And night were bright like day;
 If you were April's lady,
 And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
 And I were king of pain,
 We'd hunt down love together,
 Pluck out his flying feather,
 And teach his feet a measure,
 And find his mouth a rein;
 If you were queen of pleasure,
 And I were king of pain.

It is neither possible nor pleasant to summarise all the poems. Some of them—*The Leper*, for example—are simply disgusting. The second and third series of *Poems and Ballads* were more chastened and subdued in both subject and tone. The more notable of the pieces in the second series are: *A Forsaken Garden*, *Lament on Baudelaire*, and *Translations from the French of Villon*. *A Forsaken Garden*

is a gloomy picture of death, decay and desolation. The lament on Baudelaire is disappointing. There is in it no real passion of sorrow or suffering, and it is irrelevant to place it, as some critics have done, alongside of *Adonais* or *Thyrsis* or any other of the great English elegies. For a taste of *Villon* the following three stanzas should suffice. An old and faded beauty bemoans the loss of her charms—

VI

Where is my faultless forehead's white,
The lifted eyebrows, soft gold hair,
Eyes wide apart and keen of sight,
With subtle skill in the amorous air,
The straight nose, great nor small, but fair,
The small carved ears of shapeliest growth,
Chin dimpling, colour good to wear,
And sweet red splendid kissing mouth?

VII

The shapely slender shoulders small,
Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
Round little breasts, the hips withal
High, full of flesh, not scant of size,
Fit for all amorous masteries.

IX

Thus endeth all the beauty of us.
The arms made short, the hands made lean,
The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
The breasts, alack! all fallen in;
The flanks too, like the breasts, grown thin;

For the lank thighs, no thighs but skin,
They are specked with spots like sausage-meat.

This cult of love and beauty is continued in the third series of *Poems and Ballads*, but there is nothing very striking or memorable in the volume worth quoting here.

In *Tristram of Lyonesse*, Swinburne pursued his favourite theme of love-passion with a vehemence and freedom which is in sharp contrast to the restraint of Tennyson's version of the legend. He had no more narrative gift than dramatic. The narrative is hampered by excess of ornament and rhetoric and is redeemed only by lyrical passages of great beauty. Sample the exaltation of love in the Prelude—

Prelude

Tristram and Iseult

Love, that is first and last of all things made,
The light that has the living world for shade,
The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison,
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,

And alway through new act and passion new
 Shines the divine same body and beauty through,
 The body spiritual of fire and light
 That is to worldly noon as noon to light;
 Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man
 And spirit within the flesh whence breath began;
 Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime;
 Love, that is blood within the veins of time;
 That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,
 Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
 And with the pulse and motion of his breath
 Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and death,
 The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live
 Through day and night of things alternative,
 Through silence and through sound of stress and strife,
 And ebb and flow of dying death and life;
 Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,
 Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears,
 That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings;
 Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things;
 Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,
 The whole world's fiery forces not burn down;
 Love, that what time his own hands guard his head
 The whole world's fiery forces not burn down;
 Love, that what time his own hands guard his head
 The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike dead;
 Love, that if once his own hands make his grave
 The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save;
 Love, that for very life shall not be sold,
 Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold;
 So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,
 Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell;
 So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,
 Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven;
 Love that is fire within thee and light above,
 And lives by grace of nothing but of love;
 Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire
 Led these twain to the life of tears and fire;
 Through many and lovely days and much delight
 Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

or in Iseult's prayer—

Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,
 Though cheek wither, brow fade, and bosom wane,
 Shall I change also from this heart again
 To maidenhood of heart and holiness?
 Shall I more love thee, Lord, or love him less—
 Ah miserable! though spirit and heart be rent,
 Shall I repent, Lord God? Shall I repent?
 Nay, though thou slay me! for herein I am blest,
 That as I loved him yet I love him best—
 More than mine soul of thy love or thee,
 Though thy love save and my love save not me.

This poem also illustrates an important aspect of Swinburne's poetry—his passion for the sea. He himself was a keen swimmer and his descriptions of Tristram's swimming and of rowing are among the grandest passages in his poetry.

Songs before Sunrise. The poems in this volume were written during the Italian struggle for independence. Swinburne had admired Mazzini from his boyhood, and his revolutionary spirit, nurtured on Shelley, Landor, and Victor Hugo found in the Italian struggle all the elements—Papacy, Austrian empire, Napoleon III—to provoke him to a scathing denunciation of priests and princes. He poured in his songs all his fiery passion for the liberty of 'Italia, the world's wonder, the world's care!' The most remarkable thing about this collection is that for the first time and in a real sense the poems clothe a body of serious thought, and are not as in most of his other works, empty music. The best of these is *Hertha* which perhaps is the finest and most condensed expression of Swinburne's paganism-cum-humanism. *Hertha* was an ancient German goddess representing Earth, or the Universal Spirit. In the poem she calls upon man to drop his newly acquired gods and return to the ancient worship of Nature, the giver of freedom and all good. Here are a few of its stanzas—

- 1 The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: Ye shall live and not die.
2. But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they shall die and not live.
- 9 Though sore be my burden
And more than Ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or death-worms below.
- 10 These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is in this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and seas.
13. I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.
16. O my sons, O too dutiful
Towards Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.
- 17 Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.
- 18 For his twilight is come on him,

His anguish is here;
 And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
 Grown grey from his fear,
 And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

(From *Hertha*)

Criticism

Although more than half a century has elapsed since his death, Swinburne is not easy to write about objectively. Opinions about him differ as widely as about Byron whom he resembles in some respects. One thing, however, is certain. His place among English poets is as assured as Byron's. His poetry has no longer the glamour it had for his contemporaries. This glamour consisted in the music of his verse. As a metrical technician he is indeed without parallel among English poets. He displays an unfailing command of musical words, rhythms and rhymes. No other poet has invented so many metres or stanzas. This metrical dexterity, however, seems often an end in itself. Swinburne's poems are mere rhapsodies—rushing torrents of words yielding little sense. The pagan or humanistic philosophy of his political or libertarian poems does not amount to much and cannot save him from the charge of sterility. With his redundant volubility, Swinburne seems to say more than he actually does.

T.S. Eliot has remarked that the meaning of Swinburne's seemingly weighty statements 'is merely the hallucination of meaning'. The question then is: Is meaning or message essential to poetry? Coleridge once remarked that "To please me a poem must be either music, or sense; if it is neither, I confess I cannot interest myself in it." Swinburne has music galore and by this criterion is truly a poet. But is he a great poet? Coleridge's statement is only an *obiter dictum* and not a formal or comprehensive definition of poetry. Music alone, or sense alone, may make a poem but not a great poem. Great poetry is an integration of the two. Swinburne's appeal is only to the ear; he has nothing to feed the mind or the emotions. And poetry, however musical, which fails to do this, is not of the highest kind. Even in regard to Swinburne's music it is not hypercritical to confess that it is more dazzling than charming. In this latter quality Shelley remains the supreme lyrical singer.

Swinburne's pet themes are two: the unreasoning cruelty of God to man, and perverted sensuality. The poems on Italian liberty were a temporary diversion and differ from the rest of his work only in respect of their thought which, however, is neither very original nor profound. But whether the theme is aggressive atheism or lust, or for that matter liberty, his passion has no conviction. On the surface his verse is all ablaze with passion—boundless, uncontrollable, morbid—but it strikes no spark in the reader. It is all literary, academic, intellectualised. His poetry has echoes of the early Romantics—Shelley, Keats, Byron—Landor, Rossetti, Baudelaire and Victor Hugo. His atheism he owed to Shelley, his republicanism to Shelley, Byron, Landor and Victor Hugo and his sensuality to

Byron, though he gave it a perverted twist. He had no first-hand experience of life, having seen it only through the mirror of books and pictures. He was not a creator or inventor except in the music of his verse. His world is furthest removed from reality. It is a dream-world inhabited by medieval Knights in armour or Greek gods, nymphs and satyrs. Even his poems on behalf of Italian freedom have the same taint of unreality. In short, his fiery passion, whether atheistic, sensual, or republican is artificial, simulated, impersonal. Swinburne, like Byron, was a poseur. He is the last of the pre-Raphaelites as also the last of the great Victorian poets. His poetry is the culmination or rather the *reductio ad absurdum* of romantic worship of beauty. With him aestheticism shades off into the movement of 'art for art's sake'.

To sum up, Swinburne is a lop-sided poet in that he sacrifices sense to sound. It is unlikely that he will ever recover anything like his original popularity, not because of his atheism or glorification of lust—for such things no longer offend the generality in the permissive society of today—but because of his excess. He is a bore.

CHAPTER 39

VICTORIAN LITERATURE: POETRY (3)

Lesser Poets

Coventry Patmore (1823-96) was privately educated and was Assistant Librarian at the British Museum. From early life he had a sense of mission to celebrate conjugal love in narrative verse and leave to mankind a message on a subject which had been generally ignored by other poets. This he achieved in *The Angel in the House* (1854-60), a poem in octosyllabics, which traces the courtship, the wedding, and the trivial incidents of the married life of Felix and Honoria, a dean's daughter. Simple yet choice diction, fluent verse, felicitous fancy, and above all sincere and tender feeling combine to invest the theme with a halo of sanctity which greatly appealed to the Victorians who had a special sentiment for the sacredness of married life. Patmore was a friend of the pre-Raphaelites, but he has nothing of their medievalism or archaism. Indeed his enormous popularity was due to his poetic treatment of the drab realities of contemporary domestic and social life. The best parts of the poem are those which deal with the philosophy or psychology of love. Honoria during the period of courtship is leaving for a holiday in London—

She had forgot to bring a book,
I lent one, blamed the print for old;
And did not tell her that she took
A Petrarch worth its weight in gold.
I hoped she would lose it; for my love
Was grown so dainty, high and nice,
It prized no luxury above
The sense of fruitless sacrifice.

The poem, however, is not without some childish conceits—

I saw you take his kiss! 'Tis true.
'O modesty! 'Tis was strictly kept;
He thought I thought he thought I slept.'

The poem was obviously autobiographical written in honour of his

beautiful first wife, and yet Patmore had two more wives after her. In 1864 he became a convert to Roman Catholicism and in 1877 published *The Unknown Eros*, a collection of mystical odes in Pindaric or irregular metres couched in a highly ornamental language, so strangely contrasted with his earlier simple and light-hearted manner that the two poems hardly seem the work of one and the same person. Though the Catholic mysticism of the odes is too difficult to follow, his pet thesis is all too clear, namely, that human love is a reflection of divine love. The collection also includes Patmore's finest lyrics. These are either descriptive Nature pieces with Wordsworthian touches (*Auras of Delight*) or emotional effusions over a single domestic situation or mood. The best known is *The Toys* expressing remorse at beating his child.

The Toys

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes
And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,
Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,
I struck him, and dismiss'd
With hard words and unkiss'd,
—His Mother, who was patient, being dead.
Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,
I visited his bed,
But found him slumbering deep,
With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.
And I, with moan,
Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;
For, on a table drawn beside his head,
He had put, within his reach,
A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone
A piece of glass abraded by the beach.
And six or seven shells,
A bottle with bluebells,
And two French copper coins, ranged there with careful art
To comfort his sad heart.
So when that night I pray'd
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good,
Then, fatherly not less
Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath, and say,
'I will be sorry for their childishness'.

Patmore is not a great poet, but has originality enough to survive as a minor *bourgeois* poet. To an age that has grown cynical towards marriage, *The Angel in the House* must seem a grand joke.

James Thomson (1834-82). He signed himself B.V. to show his admiration for Shelley (Bysshe) and Novalis, the German romantic poet of the 18th century. Son of a sailor he was trained as an army

teacher, but was dismissed for irregular conduct. Thereafter he did odd jobs—journalism, mining, but had no luck. He was a free-thinker, took to drinking and led a life of misery in London. He had nevertheless a strong vein of poetry in him which is shown in his powerful poem *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880). The city, of course, is London. Thomson's despairing pessimism fills the poem. Here is a sample—

O length of the intolerable hours,
 O nights that are as aeons of slow pain,
 O Time, too ample for our vital powers,
 O Life, whose woeful vanities remain
 Immutable for all of all our legions
 Through all the centuries and in all the regions
 Not of your speed and variance we complain,
 We do not ask a longer term of strife,
 Weakness and weariness and nameless woes,
 We do not claim renewed and endless life
 When this which is our torment here shall close,
 An everlasting conscious inanition!
 We yearn for speedy death in full fruition,
 Dateless oblivion and divine repose.

This 'laureate of pessimism', however, wrote some fine lyrics also, which might save him from 'dateless oblivion'.

Gifts

Give me a man a horse he can ride,
 Give a man a boat he can sail:
 And his rank and wealth, his strength and health,
 On sea nor shore shall fail.
 Give a man a pipe he can smoke,
 Give a man a book he can read:
 And his home is bright with a calm delight,
 Though the room be poor indeed.
 Give a man a girl he can love,
 As I, O my love, love thee;
 And his heart is great with the pulse of Fate,
 At home, on land, on sea.

George Meredith (1828-1909), a major novelist and minor poet, is popular as neither. A brief account of his life will be found in a later chapter where his novels are discussed. In Meredith the poet philosophy comes first. To preach this he sacrifices poetic beauty. Like Jacques in *As You Like It* he is full of matter, but this matter is expressed in speech which is habitually as difficult and obscure as that of Browning. He was an intellectual giant, and few even of those who do not like him have ever questioned his originality, his keen insight into human character, the sanity of his criticism of life, and the astonishing command of brilliant and aphoristic expression. He could write lovely lyrics and there are passages of bewitching beauty in some of his Nature poems in *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*

(1883), and *A Reading of Earth* (1888). Outside of these his most famous work is *Modern Love* (1862), a series of fifty sonnets (of 16 lines each) telling, in Meredith's obscure manner, the tragic story of passionate married love leading to quarrels, misunderstandings, jealousy and infidelity, and ultimately ending in separation and the death of the wife by poison. Meredith's sharp perception of human psychology is testified by the following lines which have become proverbial—

In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be ! Passions spin the plot.
We are betrayed by what is false within.

His other volumes, *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life* (1887) and *Last Poems* (1909) are occupied mostly with his philosophy of life. It is a pagan philosophy whose central doctrine is worship of Earth—

Into the breast that gives the rose,
Shall I with shuddering fall?
Earth, the mother of all,
Moves on her steadfast way,
Gathering, flinging, sowing.
Mortals, we live in her day,
She in her children is growing.
She can lead us, only she,
Unto God's footstool, whither she reaches:
Loved, enjoyed, her gifts must be,
Reverenced the truths she teaches,
Ere a man may hope that he
Ever can attain the glee
Of things without a destiny!

(*Spirit of the Earth in Autumn*)

Earth is our mother. We are rooted in her and draw from her our sustenance. It is only by enjoying her gifts, not by rejecting them, that man can attain God or Heaven. This is Meredith's philosophy in a nutshell. It is repeated and elaborated in poem after poem. Body, Brain and Spirit must have a balanced development. Health of body, enlightenment of mind and refinement of spirit—the three must work in harmonious cooperation before man can attain divine status. Meredith insists upon the Greek virtue of moderation or temperance. He warns us against sensuality as well as asceticism, for both are selfish, being rooted in the ego, our lower self. The aim is to spiritualise the life of Earth, to achieve through evolution the ideal of Superman—Spiritual superman.

This is a sane, courageous and optimistic philosophy, though not all thinking readers will accept the proposition that the greatest truths experienced by man are derived from Earth. Their source, surely, is not Earth or even Nature, but the divine spirit of man. However that may be, it's a pity that such sound wisdom should have been uttered in dark, harsh, and unmusical language. Want of music is a serious defect in poetry, but Meredith's poetry has the additional defect of unintelligibility. This unintelligibility is primarily due to

excessive compression of phrase, aggravated by oracular allusiveness and bad syntax. To read his poetry is an invitation to headache. He must remain the favourite only of a coterie. Nevertheless, all can enjoy his simpler lyrics like *Love in the Valley*.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), like Meredith, is a major novelist and minor poet but unlike Meredith is popular as both. Like Meredith, again, Hardy the poet is more intent on his philosophy than on form and style. This philosophy briefly stated is the fatalism of Swinburne and Omar Khayyam. Meredith looked upon the Universe as well designed, but according to Hardy the universe is without order or purpose, ruled by a Power which at best is indifferent to human joys and sorrows, and at worst is spitefully cruel, bent on frustrating all man's schemes of love and labour. The title of one of his novels *Life's Little Ironies* would be a fitting description of most of his philosophical poems. As in the novels, incidents and situations in the poems are manipulated in order to point the ironical moral.

Hardy turned entirely to verse after the cruel reception given to his last novel *Jude the Obscure*. His first volume of verse *Wessex Poems* appeared in 1898, though some of the poems in it were written earlier. This was followed by many other volumes, the most notable being *The Dynasts* which appeared between 1903 and 1908. This is a huge epic drama of the Napoleonic wars with as many as one hundred and thirty scenes with choruses of spirits, etc. commenting on the action. It is not meant to be acted except in the theatre of the mind. Though it embodies the same pessimistic view of life as is expressed in so many of his other poems, it mercifully offers the consoling hope that the Immanent Will or the Supreme Being will relent and deal with his creation more fairly. This hope is put in the mouth of the last chorus—the chorus of the Pities—

That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will reforming, till it fashion all things fair!

As regards form and style it has to be confessed that Hardy is no music maker. Nor has he any airs and graces of the Romantics. As against the tradition of Keats and Tennyson he is homespun, prosaic, tough. His diction as well as his rhythm is obviously strained. These drawbacks, however, do not obscure his poetic power. This is especially true of his lyrics of love and Nature. His philosophy is depressing but his lyrics are moving. And even in regard to his philosophy, it may be said that however bitter his sense of the irony of fate, his compassion for suffering humanity and dumb animals is large.

Some of the poems that are general favourites are: *To an Unborn Pauper Child*, *Drummer Hodge*, *Afterwards*, *The Darkling Thrush*, *In Time of The Breaking of Nations*.

The Darkling Thrush is a beautiful illustration of Hardy's joy in Nature as well as of his pessimism. Standing at the gate of a coppice

one winter evening the poet was surveying the ravages of winter when he was roused by the sudden and full-throated song of an aged thrush. He was struck by the contrast between the happiness of the bird and the bleak, frozen prospect all round—

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy, good-night air
Some blessed Hope, where of he knew
And I was unaware.

The same pessimistic note is struck in the poem addressed *To an Un-born Pauper Child*. The poet says that if his cry could reach 'the ear of wombed souls' and they had the choice to be or not to be, he would warn them against the perils that are in store for them in this world. But as the wish is vain and the pauper child can't help being born, the poet is resigned to his coming and suffering the common lot. The situation is obviously contrived, but it is so deftly handled that the poem succeeds in realizing it.

In Time of the Breaking of Nations, a poem written in 1915 (during the first World War), expresses the poet's sense of permanence of the elemental life of man's labour and love as contrasted with the passing of dynasties. The first stanza pictures a man and his old horse harrowing a field. In the second, smoke rises upward from a heap of burning grass. In the third and last—

Yonder a maid and his wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

The number of lesser poets of the Victorian age is so large that a detailed account of them all is simply impossible in this book. Time has weeded out many, and of the remaining only a running notice is all that is possible. They may be conveniently grouped under three heads: Women poets, Writers of light verse, and Miscellaneous poets.

Women Poets

The Victorian age produced quite a large number of women writers of verse. The greatest of these were, of course, Mrs. Browning and Christina Rossetti whose work has already been considered. George Eliot wrote some verse, but it is slight and unimportant. Emile Bronte shows in her poems not a little of the fire and intensity which characterises her powerful novel *Wuthering Heights*. Ann Procter (1825-64), daughter of 'Barry Cornwall', was a Catholic much devoted to works of charity. She was a friend of Dickens and

wrote grave poems and hymns. Some of her hymns have been adopted for common use. Jean Ingelow (1820-97) achieved great popularity in the 60s with her religious poetry, which is tender, graceful, and moving. Today she is remembered by one poem *High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire in 1571*. Augusta Webster (1837-94) was a noted Greek translator. Her poetry shows the influence of Browning. Alice Meynell (1847-1922) wrote essays as well as poems, and both of high quality. Her poems are remarkable for their simplicity and restraint. Mary Coleridge (1867-1907), great-grand niece of Coleridge (i.e. grand-daughter of the poet's nephew), wrote pretty lyrics some of which have melancholy charm.

Writers of Light Verse

The English are a sad and sombre nation, but they are saved from being sadder by their sense of humour. Every age has produced its light-hearted literature, but no other period is richer in humorous poetry than the 19th century. Non-serious verse deserves a higher place in the literary pantheon than is usually given to it, and it's a pity that writers like Edward Lear, 'Lewis Carroll', and W.S. Gilbert who have added so much to the gaiety of nations should have to be classed as lesser poets and relegated to odd places in a history of literature. Maybe they will be read and enjoyed long after the seers of the era—Carlyle, Newman, Arnold and Ruskin—are forgotten.

Humorous poetry has many styles, the principal forms being burlesque, parody, *vers de societe*, topical comic verse and sheer extravaganza. Of these burlesque and parody are imitative in that they are caricatures of persons or styles of writing. Burlesque is a large term and is rather loosely used to cover several styles such as serio-comic, mock-heroic, etc. Parody is a special kind of burlesque which ridicules the mannerisms of authors, especially of poets. *Vers de societe* or 'Society verse' aims at humorous presentation of the fashions and foibles of the upper classes. Satire often avails itself of burlesque and other forms of humorous verse which themselves may sometimes be mixed.

Humorous poetry began as early as Chaucer's *Sir Topas*, a burlesque of the feeble romances of his day. Nearly three hundred years after Chaucer came Butler's *Hudibras*, a savage satire on the Roundheads. Buckingham in *Rehearsal* and Fielding in *Tom Thumb* ridiculed the dramatic absurdities of the times. From the crude mockery of these burlesques we pass to the airy grace and polished wit of Matthew Prior's *vers de societe* and the sprightly and bohemian irresponsibility of Gay's *Beggar's Opera*.

The 19th century begins with the brilliant wit and humour of the *Anti Jacobin* of which the moving spirits were Canning and John Hookham Frere (1769-1846). It was Frere's work, especially his mock-romantic poem on King Arthur, which Byron took as his model for his light-hearted and genial satire, *Beppo*. Frere, great as he was as a master of caustic wit, was outshone by the Smith

brothers (James and Horace) in their *Rejected Addresses* (1812). As parodies they are among the finest in the language. Passing over the hilarious jestings of that astonishing improviser of comic rhymes, Theodore Hook (1788-1841), and the sustained grotesquerie Hood's *Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg, a Golden Legend* (1841-43) we come to the immensely popular grotesque tales *The Iugoldsby Legends* (1840) of Barham. In W.M. Praed (1802-39), we pass from the grotesque to the elegant. In the aristocratic, polished wit of his *vers de societe* Praed is the direct descendant of Prior and almost his equal. Of the few cultivators of *vers de societe* in the Victorian era the only successful disciple of Praed was Frederick Locker-Lampson (1821-95). Few think of Thackeray as a poet, but he has left a considerable body of light verse of all kinds except parody. His occasional and topical verse is rather journalistic and has lost its point, but his excursions into *vers de societe* are excellent; for example 'The Age of Wisdom' in *Rebecca and Rowena*, and 'Sorrows of Werther'.

The favour enjoyed by 'Society verse' passed to parody which became not only high art but also an instrument of criticism. The examples set by the *Anti Jacobin* and *Rejected Addresses* were maintained and bettered by writers of the Victorian era: Aytoun's *Bon Gaultier Ballads* (1845) and *Firmilian* (1855) have already been noticed elsewhere. After him come C.S. Calverley (1831-83), James K. Stephen (1859-92) and A.C. Hilton (1851-77), all Cambridge scholars in whose hands parody attained new heights. Calverley was the greatest of the three and has long been the standard by which other parodists are judged. He and Stephen parodied Browning, while Hilton is known for his poem *Octopus*, considered the best of all the parodies of Swinburne in the vein of *Dolores*. Their tradition was carried on well into the 20th century by Arthur Quiller-Couch (Q) (1863-1944), Professor of English Literature at Cambridge and Owen Seaman (1861-1936) for long editor of *Punch*. Q parodies standard poets in *Green Bays* (1893) and Seaman contemporary poets in an imaginary contest for the vacant poet-laureateship in *The Battle of the Bays* (1896). In our own times light verse has continued to flourish and the younger writers have maintained the high quality of their predecessors.

In the domain of burlesque, W.S. Gilbert (1836-1911) vastly improved on Barham and Hood. The topsyturvy humour of his *Bab Ballads* has added the word 'Gilbertian' to the English language. The ballads were written in the 60s and were immensely popular. Some of their absurdly comic ideas were later used in the famous Gilbert and Sullivan operas during the 80s.

In the realm of extravaganza pure and simple the Victorian age boasts two outstanding names both unique in their own kind. They are Edward Lear (1812-88) and 'Lewis Carroll' (Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832-98).

Lear was a great traveller, a landscape painter and teacher of drawing to Queen Victoria. To amuse the grandchildren of his

patron, the Earl of Derby, he wrote *A Book of Nonsense* illustrated with his own drawings (1846). The rhymes in the form of a jingle called 'Limerick' are a veritable treasury of delightful nonsense. Ruskin said he would put Lear's book at the top of his list of best hundred books.

'Lewis Carroll' was by profession a clergyman and lecturer in Mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford. His most famous contributions to the literature of nonsense are *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-glass* (1872), both in prose. The nonsense of these books has an undercurrent of mathematical logic which it would be a vain endeavour to decipher. This intriguing quality of his humour appeals to the older people, while the children can ignore it and enjoy his inventive absurdity. Carroll's nonsense verse is no less amusing.

Fantastic is the only adjective one can use to describe the quality of such nonsense as fills the pages of *Jabberwocky*, *The Walrus and the Carpenter* and *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876). For mock-seriousness and affected precision it is hard to find a match for 'Lewis Carroll.'

Some samples of light verse follow.

Thackeray

Sorrows of Werther

Werther had a love for Charlotte
Such as words could never utter;
Would you know how first he met her?
She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,
And a moral man was Werther,
And, for all the wealth of Indies,
Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,
And his passion boiled and bubbled,
Till he blew his silly brains out,
And no more was by it troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter.

Frederick Locker

A Reminiscence of Infancy

I recollect a nurse call'd Ann,
Who carried me about the grass,
And one fine day a fine young man
Came up, and kiss'd the pretty lass:
She did not make the least objection!
Thinks I, 'Aha!
When I can talk I'll tell Mamma.'
—And that's my earliest recollection.

C. S. Calverley
Gemini and Virgo

Some vast amount of years ago,
 Ere all my youth had vanished from me,
 A boy it was my lot to know,
 Whom his familiar friends called Tommy.

I love to gaze upon a child;
 A young bud bursting into blossom;
 Artless, as Eve yet unbeguiled,
 And agile as a young opossum:

And such was he. A calm-brow'd lad,
 Yet mad, at moments, as a hatter:
 Why hatters as a race are mad
 I never knew, nor does it matter.

He was what nurses call a 'limb';
 One of those small misguided creatures,
 Who, tho' their intellects are dim,
 Are one too many for their teachers.

And, if you asked of him to say
 What twice 10 was, or 3 times 7,
 He'd glance (in quite a placid way)
 From heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;

And smile, and look politely round,
 To catch a casual suggestion;
 But make no effort to propound
 Any solution of the question.

And so not much esteemed was he
 Of the authorities: and therefore
 He fraternized by chance with me,
 Needing a somebody to care for:

And three fair summers did we twain
 Live (as they say) and love together:
 And bore by turns the wholesome cane
 Till our young skins became as leather:

And carved our names on every desk,
 And tore our clothes, and inked our collars;
 And looked unique and picturesque,
 But not, it may be model scholars.

We did much as we chose to do;
 We'd never heard of Mrs. Grundy;
 All the theology we knew
 Was that we mightn't play on Sunday;

And all the general truths, that cakes
 Were to be bought at four a penny,
 And that excruciating aches
 Resulted if we ate too many;

And seeing ignorance is bliss,
 And wisdom consequently folly,
 The obvious result is this –
 That our two lives were very jolly.

At last the separation came,
 Real love, at that time, was the fashion;
 And by a horrid chance, the same
 Young thing was, to us both, a passion.

Old POSER snorted like a horse:
 His feet were large, his hands were pimply

His manner, when excited coarse:
 But Miss P. was an angel simply.
 She was a blushing gushing thing;
 All—more than all—my fancy painted;
 Once—when she helped me to a wing
 Of goose—I thought I should have fainted.
 The people said that she was blue:
 But I was green, and loved her dearly.
 She was approaching thirty-two;
 And I was then eleven, nearly.
 I did not love as others do;
 (None ever did that I've heard tell of)
 My passion was a byword through
 The town she was, of course, the belle of.
 Oh sweet—as to the toilworn man
 The far-off sound of rippling river;
 As to cadets in Hindostan
 The fleeting remnant of their liver—
 To me was ANNA; dear as gold
 That fills the miser's sunless coffers;
 As to the spinster, growing old,
 The thought—the dream—that she had offers.
 I'd sent her little gifts of fruit;
 I'd written lines to her as Venus;
 I'd sworn unflinchingly to shoot
 The man who dared to come between us:
 And it was you, my Thomas, you,
 The friend in whom my soul confided,
 Who dared to gaze on her—to do,
 I may say, much the same as I did
 One night, I saw him squeeze her hand;
 There was no doubt about the matter;
 I said he must resign, or stand
 My vengeance—and he chose the latter.
 We met, we 'planted' blows on blows:
 We fought as long as we were able:
 My rival had a bottle-nose,
 And both my speaking eyes were sable.
 When the school-bell cut short our strife,
 Miss P. gave both of us a piaster;
 And in a week became the wife
 Of Horace Nibbs, the writing-master.
 I loved her then—I'd love her still,
 Only one must not love Another's:
 But thou and I, my Tommy, will,
 When we again meet, meet as brothers.
 It may be that in age one seeks
 Peace only: that the blood is brisker
 In boys' veins, than in theirs whose cheeks
 Are partially obscured by whisker:
 Or that the growing ages steal
 The memories of past wrongs from us.
 But this is certain, that I feel
 Most friendly unto thee, oh Thomas!
 And whereso'er we meet again,
 On this or that side the Equator,

If I've not turned teetotaller then,
 And have wherewith to pay the waiter,
 To thee I'll drain the modest cup,
 Ignite with thee the mild Havannah;
 And we will waft, while liquoring up,
 Forgiveness to the heartless Anna.

**Algernon Charles Sin-Burn
 Octopus**

Strange beauty, eight-limbed and eight-handed,
 Whence comest to dazzle our eyes?
 With thy bosom bespangled and banded
 With the hues of the seas and the skies;
 Is thy home European or Asian,
 O mystical monster marine?
 Part molluscous and partly crustacean,
 Betwixt and between.
 Wast thou born to the sound of sea trumpets?
 Hast thou eaten and drunk to excess
 Of the sponges—thy muffins and crumpets,
 Of the seaweed—thy mustard and cress?
 Wast thou nurtured in caverns of coral,
 Remote from reproof or restraint?
 Art thou innocent, art thou immoral,
 Sinburnian or Saint?
 Lithe limbs, curling free, as a creeper
 That creeps in a desolate place,
 To enrol and envelop the sleeper
 In a silent and stealthy embrace,
 Cruel beak craning forward to bite us,
 Our juices to drain and to drink,
 Or to whelm us in waves of Cocytus,
 Indelible ink!
 O breast, that 'twere rapture to writhe on!
 O arms 'twere delicious to feel
 Clinging close with the crush of the Python,
 When she maketh her murderous meal!
 In thy eight-fold embraces enfolden,
 Let our empty existence escape;
 Give us death that is glorious and golden,
 Crushed all out of shape!
 Ah! thy red lips, lascivious and luscious,
 With death in their amorous kiss,
 Cling round us, and clasp us, and crush us,
 With bitines of agonised bliss;
 We are sick with the poison of pleasure,
 Dispense us the potion of pain;
 Ope thy mouth to its uttermost measure
 And bite us again!

Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen

Macphairson Clonglocketty Angus M'Clan
 Was the son of an elderly labouring man,
 You've guessed him a Scotchman shrewd reader, at sight,
 An p'raps altogether, shrewd reader, you're right.
 From the bonnie blue Forth to the hills of Deeside,
 Round by Dingwall and Wrath to the mouth of the Clyde,

There wasn't a child or a woman or man
Who could pipe with Clonglocketty Angus M'Clan.

No other could wake such detestable groans.
With reed and with chaunter—with bag and with drones:
All day and all night he delighted the chiefs
With sniggering pibrochs and jiggety reels.

He'd clamber a mountain and squat on the ground,
And the neighbouring maidens would gather around
To list to his pipes and to gaze in his e'en,
Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen.

All loved their M'Clan, save a Sassenach brute,
Who came to the Highlands to fish and to shoot;
He dressed himself up in a Highlander way,
Though his name it was Pattison Corby Torbay.

Torbay had incurred a good deal of expense
To make him a Scotchman in every sense;
But this is a matter, you'll readily own,
That isn't a question of tailors alone.

A Sassenach chief of may be bonily built,
He may purchase a sporran, a bonnet, and kilt;
Stick a skean in his hose—wear an acre of stripes—
But he cannot assume an affection for pipes.

Clonglocketty's pipings all night and all day
Quite frenzied poor Pattison Corby Torbay;
The girls were amused at his singular spleen,
Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen.

'Macphairson Clonglocketty Angus, my lad,
With pibrochs and reels you are driving me mad;
If you really must play on that cursed affair,
My goodness! play something resembling an air.'

Boiled over the blood of Macphairson M'Clan—
The clan of Clonglocketty rose as one man;
For all were enraged at the insult, I ween—
Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen.

'Let's show,' said M'Clan, 'to this Sassenach loon
That the bagpipes can play him a regular tune.
Let's see, said M'Clan, as he thoughtfully sat,
'"In My Cottage" is easy—I'll practice at that'.

He blew at his 'Cottage', and blew with a will,
For a year, seven months, and a fortnight, until
(You'll hardly believe it) M'Clan, I declare,
Elicited something resembling an air.

It was Wild—it was fitful—as wild as the breeze—
It wandered about into several keys;
It was jerky, spasmodic, and harsh, I'm aware,
But still it distinctly suggested an air.

The Sassenach screamed, and the Sassenach danced,
He shrieked in his agony—bellowed and pranced;
And the maidens who gathered rejoiced at the scene.
Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen.

'Hech gather, hech gather, hech gather around;
And fill a 'yer lugs wi' the exquisite sound.
An air frae the bagpipes—beat that if you can!
Hurrah for Clonglocketty Angus M'Clan!'

The fame of his piping spread over the land:
 Respectable widows proposed for his hand,
 And maidens came flocking to sit on the green—
 Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen.

One morning the fidgety Sassenach swore
 He'd stand it no longer—he drew his claymore,
 And (this was, I think, in extremely bad taste),
 Divided Clongloketty close to the waist.

Oh! loud were the wailings for Angus M'Clan—
 Oh! deep was the grief for that excellent man—
 The maids stood aghast at the horrible scene,
 Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen.

It sorrowed poor Pattison Corby Torbay
 To find them 'take on' in this serious way,
 He pitied the poor little fluttering birds,
 And solaced their souls with the following words:

'Oh, maidens,' said Pattison, touching his hat,
 'Don't snivel, my dears, for a fellow like that:
 Observe, I'm a very superior man,
 A much better fellow than Angus M'Clan'.

They smiled when he winked and addressed them as 'dears,'
 And they all of them vowed, as they dried up their tears
 A pleasanter gentleman never was seen—
 Especially Ellen M'Jones Aberdeen. (From *Bab Ballads*)

The Judge's Song

When I, good friends, was called to the Bar,
 I'd an appetite fresh and hearty,
 But I was, as many young barristers are,
 An impecunious party,
 I'd a swallow-tail coat of a beautiful blue—
 A brief which was brought by a booby—
 A couple of shirts and a collar or two,
 And a ring that looked like a ruby!

In Westminster Hall I danced a dance,
 Like a semi-despondent fury;
 For I thought I should never hit on a chance
 Of addressing a British Jury—
 But I soon got tired of third-class journeys,
 And dinners of bread and water;
 So I fell in love with a rich attorney's
 Elderly, ugly daughter.

The rich attorney, he wiped his eyes,
 And replied to my fond professions:
 'You shall reap the reward of your enterprise,
 At the Bailey and Middlesex Sessions.
 You'll soon get used to her looks, said he,
 'And a very nice girl you'll find her—
 She may very well pass for forty-three
 In the dusk, with a light behind her!'

The rich attorney was as good as his word:
 The briefs came trooping gaily,
 And every day my voice was heard
 At the Sessions or Ancient Bailey.
 All thieves who could my fees afford
 Relied on my orations,

And many a burglar I've restored
 To his friends and his relations.
 At length I became as rich as the Gurneys—
 An incubus then I thought her,
 So I threw over that rich attorney's
 Elderly, ugly daughter.
 The rich attorney my character high
 Tried vainly to disparage—
 And now, if you please, I'm ready to try
 This Breach of Promise of Marriage! (From *Trial by Jury*)

Edward Lear

There was an old Person of Anerley, whose conduct was
 strange and unmannerly;
 He rushed down the Strand, with a pig in each hand,
 But returned in the evening to Anerley.

(From *A Book of Nonsense*)

Miscellaneous Poets

These are listed below in chronological order.

1. Lord Houghton (Richard Moncton Milnes, 1809-85), remembered as the first editor of Keats, rather than by his poetry which, however, is simple, musical and full of good sense.

2. Sir Francis Doyle (1810-88), poet of military life, remembered by such poems as "The Private of the Buffs" and on the loss of the "Birkenhead".

3. Aubrey de Vere, Junior (1814-1902), a follower of Wordsworth, wrote on classical and Irish legends. William Johnson Cory (1823-92) noted for his classical finish and pagan poems. He influenced Housman.

4. Palgrave, Francis Turner (1824-97), Professor of Poetry at Oxford for ten years (1885-95) is famous for his anthology *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (1861, second series 1896). His original poetry is of little account.

5. William Allingham (1824-89) remembered by his songs like that on "The Fairies" beginning "Up the airy mountain/Down the rushing glen."

6. George Macdonald (1824-1905), a real but neglected poet, was like Palgrave an anthologist.

7. Thomas Edward Brown (1830-97), once very popular but now neglected, shows religious and mystical inspiration and his poems of simple, homely piety are reminiscent of Wordsworth. For example, the little poem 'Salve': "To live within a cave—it is most good."

8. Earl Lytton (1831-91), Viceroy of India and son of Bulwar Lytton of *The Last Days of Pompeii* fame, was a very facile poet who produced many volumes of verse under the pseudonym of 'Owen Meredith'. He has been charged with affectation and plagiarism. His real defect, however, was his excessive fluency.

9. Sir Edwin Arnold (1832-1904), a journalist, attained great popularity by his poem on the Buddha, *The Light of Asia*.

10. Canon Dixon (Richard Watson, 1833-1900), allied to the pre-Raphaelites, has the serious defect of obscurity.

11. Lord de Tabley (John Leicester Warren, 1835-95), though a real poet, he was eclipsed by Swinburne. His tragedy *Philoctetes* appeared in 1866, the year of the *Atalanta* and was forgotten. His collected poems were published in 1903.

12. Sir Alfred Lyall (1835-1911) of the I.C.S. was Lieut-governor of N. W. Frontier Province. His volume of *Verses Written in India* (1889) is of special interest to Indians. It contains poems on Hindu religion, the Pindarees, etc.

13. Alfred Austin (1835-1913), a journalist, was made poet-laureate after Tennyson. He is all but forgotten.

14. John Addington Symonds (1840-93), notable in both prose and verse, suffers from excessive richness of fancy.

15. Austin Dobson (1840-1921) whose prose 'studies' were at one time very popular, is remembered in verse anthologies by such pretty and polished pieces as *Fame and Friendship* and *After-days*.

16. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), was a man of means and position who came into conflict with authority by his anti-imperialistic views. He favoured the nationalist movements of India, Ireland and Egypt. His well-known volumes of verse are the *Love Sonnets of Proteus* (1880) and *The Seven Golden Sonnets of Pagan Arabia* (1903). Besides these there are very attractive lyrics some of which reflect the author's love of old ways and independence (*The Old Squire*). Blunt is not a negligible Victorian.

17. Robert Buchanan (1841-1901), a voluminous writer of undistinguished verse, is now remembered for his pseudonymous attack on Rossetti and Swinburne in *The Fleshly School of Poetry*.

18. C.M. Doughty (1843-1926), has won notoriety by his ponderous and unintelligible productions in both prose and verse. His massive epics like *The Dawn in Britain* (1906), *Mansoul* (1920), etc. are as difficult and incomprehensible as his prose *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888).

19. Andrew Lang (1844-1922) was a voluminous writer of many forms of literature. As verse writer, he showed special aptitude for French lyrical forms: ballade, rondeau, triolet, etc. He was singularly successful in adapting these in his English lyrics.

20. Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy (1844-1881), a friend of Rossetti and a minor pre-Raphaelite produced several volumes of verse, but survives by a few pieces like the Ode beginning "We are the music makers/And we are the dreamers of dreams."

21. William Ernest Henley (1849-1903), journalist, critic and poet is well-known for the strident stoicism of his poem *Invictus*—"I am the master of my fate:/I am the captain of my soul." Like Andrew Lang he was an adept in French lyric forms. His best things and sweeter than the *Invictus*—are to be found in the collections called *In Hospital*, *Echoes*, *Hawthorn and Lavender*, and *London Voluntaries*.

As a critic he was too aggressive to have much value.

22. R.L. Stevenson (1850-94), famous for his delightful essays, romances, and short stories has secured a permanent niche for himself in English verse by *A Child's Garden of Verses*, *Underwoods*, *Songs of Travel* and *Moral Emblems*. As he himself never grew up he had a wonderful insight into child-mind, and his *Child's Garden* is the best collection of its kind in English. The other volumes of verse are as youthful, vivacious and humorous as his prose things. He deserves the distinction of being briefly quoted.

Wishes

Go, little book, and wish to all
Flowers in the garden, meat in the hall,
A bin of wine, a spice of wit,
A house with lawns enclosing it,
A living river by the door,
A nightingale in the sycamore.

Requiem

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die
And I laid me down with a will.

23. John Davidson (1857-1909), an extreme pessimist and atheist, had an unhappy life which he ended by suicide. Paradoxically enough, however, he had genuine poetic power as evidenced by such an anthology piece as *A Runnable Stag*. Nothing that he wrote is mean or feeble. His *Fleet Street Eclogues* (1893-95), *Ballads and Songs* (1894) were very popular at the time. His bitter philosophy makes his *Testaments* (1901-8) less interesting.

24. Sir William Watson (1858-1935) has a large volume of verses to his credit, but he is more likely to be remembered by his elegies on Wordsworth and Tennyson: *Wordsworth's Grave* (1890), *Lachrymae Musaram* (1892), and some Nature pieces that figure in anthologies. In his later poetry he sounded national and political notes. In the sonnets of *The Year of Shame* and *The Purple East* (1896) he denounced the Turks for their atrocities in Armenia, not sparing the British government, for its failure to help that country. He also wrote poems on the Great War. A poet of vision, Watson has eloquence as well as music. His *Ode in May* is a notable example.

25. Francis Thomson (1859-1907), a devout Roman Catholic poet suffered from ill-health and extreme poverty from which he was rescued by Mr. and Mrs. Meynell. His first volume of *Poems* containing the famous 'Hound of Heaven' appeared in 1893. This was followed by *Sister Songs* (1895) and *New Poems* (1897). His mysticism and ornate diction ally him to Crashaw and the Metaphysicals. In his famous poem the poet is pursued by God (the hound of heaven) and is ultimately overtaken. To call God a hound is not only odd but

offensive, but the conceit is of a piece with the fantastic imagery of the Metaphysical school. Thomson did not confine himself to mysticism; he also wrote poems on Nature and the game of cricket. He has poetic force that compels attention as well as admiration. He also wrote literary criticism, his *Essay on Shelley* being one of the very finest appreciations of the poet.

The Decadents

Before writing *Finis* to Victorian poetry, a brief mention must be made of the 'fin-de-siecle' poets, generally known as 'the decadents'. The group comprised Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Arthur Symons, Oscar Wilde, W.B. Yeats and others. From Walter Pater for whom Art was a religion they adopted the slogan of 'Art for Art's sake'. Art, they said is a necessity of civilized life but it has nothing to do with morals (compare Ruskin's moral values of art). Pater advocated the cultivation of "exquisite passion", but he pursued this passion in perfecting his highly refined and polished style. His followers, however, translated the theory into conduct and professed frank hedonism. Their dream-like poetry is characterised by exaggerated romanticism, shocking hedonism and melancholy world-weariness. By and large it is a poetry of pose, not of genuine emotion. In their flamboyant style and diction they imitated Swinburne. The most prominent of the 'art for art's sake' school was Oscar Wilde (1856-1900) who ended up in jail, being convicted of homosexuality (1895). He wrote poems, essays, fiction and plays. His *Intentions* is a series of dialogues on art and literature with a dissertation on lying, poison, drugs, etc. which he regarded as obligatory. His poems including the remarkable *Ballad of Reading Gaol* are lacking in sincerity. He shows to the best advantage in his scintillating social comedies, the most notable being *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, produced respectively in 1892, 1893 and 1895.

Of his fiction the early but most remarkable is the *Picture of Dorian Grey* (1881). In this novel the handsome and dashing Dorian Grey wishes eternal youth and beauty for himself and wants his portrait to grow old and decay. The wish being granted Dorian retains his youthful beauty and his portrait decays with age and marks of Dorian's sins including a murder, seductions of many women and other debaucheries. Horrified and repentant, Dorian tries to destroy the portrait, but miraculously it is he himself who dies ugly with age and disease, while the portrait is restored to its original freshness and beauty. The story shows that Wilde was not altogether impervious to a sense of sin and its consequences. This seriousness is reflected in the later *De Profundis*, his apologia and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* written after his imprisonment.

Arthur Symons (1865). Symbolist in style wrote of extravagant passion in *London Nights* and other volumes. He was also a leading critic of contemporary literature.

Ernest Dowson (1867-1900), a promising poet who died early. He

is remembered chiefly by the poem with the refrain "I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

Lionel Johnson (1867-1902) resembles Dowson in his unhappiness, pessimism and early death. Like Dowson he too is remembered by a single poem "By the Statue of King Charles." The poem fails, partly because it is upon a lost cause, and partly because it is forced and artificial. His book on *The Art of Hardy* (1894) has long been superseded by others.

W.B. Yeats who as a member of The Rhymers' Club was associated with the so-called 'decadents' made his name in the next century and will be noticed in the next book.

Conclusion

The poetic achievement of the Victorian Age is great in both bulk and variety. It is original at all levels and though in the main it follows the Keats-Tennyson line, it is not an echo of Keats or Tennyson. Though longer poems—some on an epic scale—have been essayed, the generally favoured form, as in the preceding periods, is the lyric. Apart from the Romantic Revival to which it is only a little inferior, the Victorian period in poetry is paralleled only by the Elizabethan. The only criticism to which Victorian poetry is open is that it is rather bookish and academic. Much of it is inspired by literature—Medieval, Renaissance or Classical—and not by direct experience of life.

CHAPTER 40

THE VICTORIAN NOVEL (1)

General characteristics—Major Novelists: Dickens—Thackeray—The Brontës—Mrs. Gaskell—Reade—Kingsley—Trollope—Collins—George Eliot—Meredith—Hardy—Gissing—Butler—Stevenson.

The Victorian era witnessed an expansion of the novel which is nothing short of phenomenal. It branched off in all directions and embraced all spheres of life so that there is hardly any recognised category of fiction of which we do not find exemplars among Victorian novelists. We have domestic novels, historical novels, political novels, mystery and crime novels, sociological novels, romantic novels, religious novels, psychological novels and perhaps some others. While the main stream of Victorian fiction flowed along the line set by Jane Austen—the line of strictly ordinary life—it occasionally changed its course to the line of romance set by Scott. Indeed, towards the end of the century, from 1880 onwards there was an unmistakable return to the romantic. And even during the mid-century when realism was the dominant note, exemplified in Thackeray and his followers, it was not completely divorced from romance in subject and plot. Dickens's realism was highly coloured by romance, and Bulwer Lytton, Charles Reade and Wilkie Collins were not unlike him.

A marked feature of the Victorian novel was its use as a vehicle of social criticism. In this field we have such names as Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Reade, Gissing, Samuel Butler and Walter Besant. From a mere string of episodes for entertainment such as *Sketches by Boz* and *Pickwick Papers*, the novel gradually developed into something more serious in purpose. It became an instrument of instruction and enlightenment. With the consciousness of purpose came a deeper awareness and a more philosophic analysis of character. The novel was no longer a bundle of feelings as, for example, in early Dickens and in the Brontës; to passion was added thought. In short the novel became more intelligent, calculated to appeal to taste and intellect. This is exemplified in Disraeli, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, Reade and Kingsley in the middle period and to a greater extent in Meredith and Hardy in the later.

In form and technique generally the Victorian novel tended to be huge and sprawling. This was due largely to the fact that a novel in the Victorian period was published in monthly or weekly instalments and was issued in three volumes (three decker). A novel written in such conditions was bound to be loose in construction. Two events of the period 1880-1900 changed all this. Henry Vizetelly (1820-94) published translations of Dostoevsky and Zola and began to issue novels in one volume. The example of continental realists in compact construction and the one volume edition resulted in improved craftsmanship. Henry James, Hardy and Stevenson are perhaps the only examples of this improvement in technique. The influence of Henry James on the side of construction and minute psychological analysis and that of the French realists led by Zola in furthering realism into naturalism became more apparent in the next century.

The field of the Victorian novel is so wide and so crowded that in order to have a sharply defined chart of it in the mind it is essential to discriminate between the novelists of the first order and those of the second.

¹ Though opinions may differ about some names, it is safe to say that those belonging to the first order are: Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Mrs. Gaskell, Reade, Kingsley, Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Meredith, Hardy, Stevenson, Gissing and Samuel Butler. Dickens and Thackeray are undoubtedly great; others though not so great are not much lesser, being writers of some genius who enlarged the scope of the novel by their contribution. Beyond these dozen or so names lies a crowd of novelists who are talented, distinguished, and still eminently readable. Such are Bulwer Lytton, Disraeli, William Hale White (Mark Rutherford), Demorgan, Olive Schreiner, Anthony Hope. Even 'Ouida' and Marie Corelli have their readers, and literary historians who turn up their noses at these names forget that, like this world, it takes all sorts to make the republic of letters. If some names have been omitted in the following survey it is not from any snobbish attitude to the humbler practitioners of the art, but for want of space.

MAJOR NOVELISTS

Charles Dickens (1812-70) was the second of eight children of John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy pay office successively at Portsmouth, Chatham, and London. He had some schooling at Chatham but this was interrupted in London because of his father's financial difficulties. He was put at the age of 12 to work in a blacking factory. A few days after, his father, unable to pay his debts, was arrested and jailed in the Marshalsea, the debtors' prison. While John's wife and other children moved into the prison to save money, Charles was lodged in a garret. Being homeless and lonely he roamed the streets ill-fed and ill-clad. "I know", he says, "that but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been for any care that was taken of me

a little robber or a little vagabond." In the factory he was assigned the task of sticking labels on the blacking bottles. In the intervals of work he consorted with fellow boy workers who were just street toughs. At home he had come to think of himself as one of the gentry, and the shock of his menial work and uncouth companions filled him with an agony of soul which left a permanent scar on his memory and which led him to paint those poignantly pathetic pictures of child suffering in *Oliver*, *Little Nell*, *Paul Dombey*, and *Pip*.

A small legacy coming to him, John Dickens paid his debts and emerged from the prison after three months. Charles, too, was taken out of the factory after five months and again put to school where he remained two and a half years. The family getting into debt again Charles left school and at the age of fifteen became a lawyer's clerk. Not liking the work he learnt shorthand and became at 17 a reporter of law cases, at 19 a reporter of Parliamentary speeches and at 21 a reporter on the *Morning Chronicle*, travelling and reporting speeches all over the country. Soon he began contributing to magazines fanciful descriptive sketches with illustrations by the famous cartoonist George Cruickshank. These were collected and issued in book form as *Sketches by Boz* (Boz being the nickname of a younger brother) in 1836. The same year he began the *Pickwick Papers* and married Catherine, daughter of George Hogarth, the editor of the *Evening Chronicle*, for whom he had done a series of sketches.

The *Pickwick Papers* appeared, like most of Dickens's novels, in monthly instalments in 1836-37. It was a resounding success, and made Dickens's fame as well as fortune at 25. Pickwick became a craze which was manifested in the boom of Pickwick hats, Pickwick cigars, Sam Weller corduroys, etc. /

(The rest of Dickens's life is a triumphant procession of his novels varied by two visits to America (1842 and 1867), journalistic ventures (the Weeklies *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*), holidays on the continent and dramatic readings from his works. Though he was full of physical vitality to the last, the strain of readings left him mentally exhausted. He died suddenly of cerebral bleeding in his 59th year. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. /

Apart from the hardships and humiliations of his childhood, the only event that cast a dark shadow over his life of incessant and joyful activity was separation from his wife in 1848 ostensibly on grounds of incompatibility. The real reason, however, was Catherine's firm belief that Dickens was keeping a young actress Ellen Ternan as his mistress. Though he denied the charge the scandal rocked the literary world. It was revealed in 1934 that Dickens had succumbed to the charms of Ellen Ternan. The revelation has since been confirmed in several books including Edgar Johnson's biography *Dickens* (1953).

Dickens's works besides those mentioned above were published as follows: *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old*

Curiosity Shop (1840-41), *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *American Notes* (1842), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), a series of Christmas stories between 1843 and 1848: *A Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes*, *Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life*, *The Haunted Man* (besides these he continued contributing similar stories to the Christmas numbers of his Weeklies), *Pictures from Italy* (1845), *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-53), *A Child's History of England* (1854), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *The Uncommercial Traveller* (collected sketches like *Boz*) (1861), *Great Expectations* (1861), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), and the unfinished *Edwin Drood* on which he was working when he died.

Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837. The same year was published *The Pickwick Papers* which enthroned its author in the hearts of the English people. In the freshness of its broad, boisterous, good-natured humour *Pickwick* is unique. Nothing like it has existed before or since. Strictly speaking, it is hardly a novel; it is just a series of scenes or episodes linked together by the presence of the Pickwickians. And what a cast! The amusing, simple and benevolent Mr. Pickwick; the witty, resourceful and loyal Sam Weller, his servant; the rascally Jingle with his snappy telegraphese; Joe, the fat boy who assumed to be always asleep wakes up at the most embarrassing moments—these and many other oddities stamped Dickens forever as an inimitable humorist.

In the novels that followed—*Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*—he introduced pathetic characters like Oliver, Nancy and Nell, and monsters like Bumble, Faggin, Squeers and Quilp who make us shudder and recoil. This combination of humour, pathos and the grotesque became the formula that runs through all his novels and constitutes their chief appeal.

Though *Pickwick* is a class by itself, its lack of unity or looseness of construction is a characteristic that marks almost all his novels. Even in those later novels—*Bleak House*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*—which are more carefully planned and closely crafted the principal appeal still lies, not in the elaborate, sometimes confused story, but in the separate scenes of humour and pathos. The later books though technically superior, somehow lack the delightful spontaneity and freshness of the earlier ones.

The spirit of reform was present in Dickens from the first. It is implicit in his description of Mr. Pickwick's sojourn in the Fleet Prison for debtors. Happily masked in *Pickwick* by the youthful author's irrepressible delight in human oddities, it becomes explicit in *Oliver Twist* which is an attack on the cruel administration of workhouses in his day.

Nicholas Nickleby is a fierce satire on the horrid conditions of Yorkshire schools exemplified in Dotheboys Hall administered by the brutal schoolmaster Squeers. The story is relieved by the benevolent Cheeryble brothers and the farce of Vincent Crummles and

his theatrical troupe.

The Old Curiosity Shop exploits the unutterable pathos of little Nell's death which is relieved by the comedy of Dick Swiveller.

Barnaby Rudge, like the later *A Tale of Two Cities*, is a historical novel and outside the mainstream of Dickens's fiction. It is a complicated story of intrigue and murder placed in the period of anti-Catholic riots—the Gordon riots—of 1780.

American Notes and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, written after Dickens's first American visit and containing his caricatures of American life, irritated the Americans and were less popular.

Martin Chuzzlewit is remarkable for its two grotesques Mr. Pecksniff, the unctuous hypocrite, and Mrs. Gamp, the garrulous and gin-sodden midwife-cum-sicknurse.

A Christmas Carol, the best of his Christmas Books, is a heart-warming story of the conversion of a churlish miser, Scrooge, and has done more to spread the Christmas message of love and open-hearted generosity than all the sermons of the Church.

Pictures from Italy, written after his Italian holiday in 1844.

Dombey and Son is a study of pride and its disastrous consequences. Mr. Dombey's melodramatic punishment—the death of his only son Paul Dombey, the death of his wife, the elopement of his second wife, the estrangement from his daughter Florence and the loss of his fortune—combines with the farce of the school master Dr. Blimber and of Bunsby, Mrs. MacStinger and Captain Cuttle. The main story ends happily with the return of Florence to her father.

David Copperfield, considered his masterpiece, is in part autobiographical. The pathos of Copperfield's loveless childhood is relieved by the broad humour of Micawber and Betsy Trotwood. The unity of the novel is easily achieved by the first-person narrative. It is also possible to see allegorical or symbolic significance in Copperfield's experiences.

A Child's History of England, written for his children, has been unduly depreciated by several critics. It is a good, simple introduction to English history upto the Victorian period.

Bleak House is a fierce exposure of Victorian society and its institutions, the principal target being the old court of Chancery and its tortuous processes which spin out cases for generations bringing ruin to the litigants. The melodramatic story is relieved by minor figures of fun, the most noteworthy being the religious humbug Chadband, Mrs. Jellyby, the professional philanthropist, Skimpole (modelled on Leigh Hunt) and Boythorn (modelled on Landor). Leigh Hunt was not amused, and protested.

✓ *Hard Times* is a vigorous satire on mechanised industry and its captains exemplified in Gadgrind and his son-in-law Bounderby who ruthlessly exploit the poor. The comic relief is provided by Sleary's circus.

Little Dorrit is an attack upon the Marshalsea, the debtors'

prison and the system that is responsible for its existence. The story, melodramatic as usual, is rather confused because of its mysterious sub-plot. Its chief interest lies in the vivid presentation of the Marshalsea scenes and in its exposures of government departments collectively named the Circumlocution Office. The Circumlocution Office is manned by incompetent aristocrats exemplified in the Barnacles, who contrive to occupy all high offices through nepotism and jobbery. Though incompetent, they are experts in the art of obstruction, the art of 'how not to do it'.

Among the funny characters the most notable are the humbug Casby, his loquacious daughter Flora, Pancks, his rent collector, Mr. F's aunt, Mr. Merdle, the swindling financier, Mrs. Merdle who 'piques herself on being society', and above all 'that eminent varnisher' Mrs. General, little Dorrit's governess. Her prescription for a becoming pout to a lady's lips is to say to herself "in company—on entering a room, for instance—Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prism, prunes and prism."

—*A Tale of Two Cities*, is a stirring historical novel based on Carlyle's *The French Revolution*. It is remarkable for its vivid scenes of Paris at the time. The two memorable characters are Madam Defarge, the perennially knitting spy, and Sydney Carton, the reckless English barrister who sacrifices his own life to save that of a French noble.

The Uncommercial Traveller is an additional and even better collection of *Sketches by Boz*.

—*Great Expectations*, a masterpiece, second only to *David Copperfield*, is a story of disappointed expectations especially in marriage, reflecting the author's own married unhappiness. The humour of the book is supplied by the hero's uncle Pumblechook and Wemmick the assistant of Jaggers the lawyer.

Our Mutual Friend illustrates the corrupting influence of wealth on character. The Boffins and the Jew Riah take high place among the 'good' characters of Dickens. In contrast, there are social upstarts like the Veneerings (a tell-tale name) and the grotesques like the one-legged villain Silas Wegg and Rogue Riderhood.

The Mystery of Edwin Drood, the unfinished novel of Dickens, was perhaps inspired by Wilkie Collins's mystery novels. Edwin Drood, an orphan, is engaged to be married to Rosa Bud, also an orphan. Rosa is also secretly loved by Edwin's uncle, the rascally Jasper and by Neville Landless, another orphan. Edwin suddenly breaks off the engagement and disappears. The fragment gives no clue to the mystery. Humorous characters are Mr. Sapsea, the auctioneer; Mr. Honeythunder, a bully and philanthropist; and the grotesque Durdles, a mason.

The World of Dickens

The world of Dickens's novels is like as well as unlike the world

of our experience. Dickens was a writer who looked upon familiar things in the light of romance. His sharp, minute observation renders everyday life in its most concrete details, but his poetic imagination invests it with the colours of fantasy. And this Dickensland is peopled with imaginary characters that are now household words. There are nearly two thousand of them (*Pickwick* alone has 300) and they are of all kinds. There is no one except Shakespeare to compare with him in abundance, vitality, and variety of characterisation. It is often said that his characters are "types" or "humours" in the Ben Jonsonian sense; embodiments, that is to say, of some peculiarity or oddity to the exclusion of all other qualities. That the characters are types may be admitted but they are also individuals. The art by which Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, Mr. Micawber, Mr. Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp, etc. are raised from types to individuals does not yield to analysis. In some cases we may seize upon some mannerisms, some tricks of speech like Sam Weller's repeated confusion of "V" and "W" in the spelling of his name, Jingle's telegraphese and addition of "very" at the end of his speech, the repetitions of Micawber, the repeated marriage proposal of Barkis—'Barkis is willing', Mrs. Gamp's habitual reference to the nonexistent Mrs. Harris; but beyond this the marvellous art by which Dickens imposes on his characters the illusion of reality eludes us. The charge that the characters are caricatures is easily answered. It is only those who have an outstanding quality, character or personality, that are caricatured. Art is never an exact transcript from life. Dickens exaggerates the peculiarities of his characters to the point of caricature, thus making them larger than life and more vital. Dickens had such an abundant relish, such a zest or gusto for the odd that he often allowed his imagination to go on the rampage. Later in his career he realized the danger and curbed his excess. While writing *Dombey and Son* he wrote to Forster: "Invention, thank God, seems the easiest thing in the world and I seem to have such a preposterous sense of the ridiculous, as to be constantly requiring to restrain myself from launching into extravagances in the height of my enjoyment."

Paradoxical as it may seem, the real in life dies, the unreal in art lives. Dickens died a century ago, but the mythology of drolls created by him still lives. If we remember all or almost all his characters and only a few of other novelists, it is because his characters are touched with poetic fantasy. It is his poetic imagination that distinguishes Dickens from all other novelists. T.S. Eliot's remark that the reality of Dickens's characters is due to 'a kind of inspiration or grace' means the same thing.

Apart from this inspiration, it is interesting to note that almost all Dickens characters had a solid base in that they were drawn from real people—people Dickens had actually met or seen. The greatest of his creations, Mr. Pickwick, was modelled on Moses Pickwick, a coach proprietor of Bath. Little Nell's original was Mary Hogarth, Dickens's sister-in-law whose death at 18 filled him with shocked grief. Micawber was the counterpart of his father. Paul

Dombey was modelled on his nephew, his sister Fanny's son. One of the most memorable of his grotesques, Miss Havisham was based on the author's boyhood recollection of a strange lady entirely dressed in white parading Berners Street. Leigh Hunt and Landor used in *Bleak House* have already been mentioned. We may be sure Mrs. Gamp too had an original.

Many of the incidents in his novels, likewise, were based on facts. Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce in *Bleak House* had a parallel in a case which filed in the court of Chancery in 1798 was still going on in 1853 when the novel appeared. All attacks Dickens made on Victorian institutions or abuses—workhouses, private schools, debtors' prisons, mechanised industry, London slums, etc.—had the solid backing of first-hand knowledge.

A more serious charge of Dickens's alleged unreality, however, remains to be considered. It is objected that the conversion of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* is outrageously incredible. To this the answer is: in the first place, the story is a parable whose symbolic purpose permits the exceptional or the improbable. Secondly, truth is stranger than fiction, and such conversions do take place in real life. The conversion of Carnegie, the American billionaire, whose charitable trusts and foundations span the world, is history. The recent surrender of hundreds of notorious bandits of Madhya Pradesh is another spectacular example of that change of heart which is the theme of Dickens's Christmas story.

Elated by his success with *Pickwick*, Dickens determined to exploit the other element in his make-up, viz. pathos. By mingling humour with tender sentiments he made a tremendous success of his subsequent novels. In *The Old Curiosity Shop*, however, the balance between the two elements was so far disturbed in favour of pathos as to make the story a grim tragedy. The long-drawn-out scenes of Little Nell's gradual decline and death wrung the hearts of millions. Dickens was an extremely sensitive person and he had to pay a heavy price for his sensitivity. Expressing his agony in a letter to a friend he cried, "I am breaking my heart over this story, and cannot bear to finish it." He also broke the hearts of his readers. Many wrote letters imploring him not to kill Nell, but there was no other way for Dickens. Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review* and most merciless of critics wept over her death without shame. Daniel O'Connell, the great Irish patriot, burst into tears on reading of her death and flung away his copy of the novel. England and America and Europe were drowned in tears. Was ever such a tribute paid to any character of any other novelist? The statue of Nell in Philadelphia gazing heavenwards as if pleading for ill-used childhood is a reminder of the effect the novel had on human hearts.

It is a cruel irony that the moderns have turned away from *The Old Curiosity Shop* and reviled Dickens for what they call his mawkish sentimentality. Aldous Huxley called the pathos of Little Nell's death a sort of emotional blackmail. Many others have ventilated

their annoyance in a similar vein. Without entering into an academic discussion of the virtue of artistic restraint such, for example, as shown by Thackeray in the death of Colonel Newcome, we may simply plead that Dickens had the defects of his virtues. He was too exuberant to restrain himself once he was launched upon a character or scene whether humorous or pathetic. Apart from this, the picture of Nell should be viewed against the background of the "hungry forties" when children were put to work as soon as they could stand on their legs. England is now an affluent society, a society from which pauperism if not poverty has been banished, and it is difficult for modern generations to comprehend what the plight of children of the poor was in those far-off days. Critics who resent the over-wrought pathos of Nell's fate should read the first chapter of the novel carefully.

The Victorians who wept copiously over Nell were neither fools nor weaklings. They were tender-hearted and extremely sentimental. They loved a good cry and were not ashamed of tears. Times have changed and so have men's attitudes to sadness and grief. If Dickens's pathos no longer moves the modern readers to tears, it is because they are now as unsentimental as their grand-parents were sentimental. Countless casualties and horrors of two great wars have brutalised them, have dulled their sense of pity. The post-Dickensian generations, those that grew up after the Education Act of 1870, are better educated, more sophisticated. Pathos embarrasses them and tears are no longer respectable.

If we have discussed the pathos of Little Nell in some detail it is because her case is the standard example cited by critics of Dickens. The modern prejudice against her has obscured Dickens's superb mastery in painting pathetic scenes in other books, notably in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield* and *Dombey and Son*. The deep pathos of Paul Dombey's death is second only to that of Nell.

(The qualities, then, that constituted Dickens's strongest appeal to the Victorians were humour and pathos, and it is precisely these qualities that still sustain that appeal to the moderns. The moderns may not like his pathos but his humour has an undying appeal. The whirligig of time may or may not bring pathos back into favour, but it is certain that Dickens will continue to be a favourite for his humour.)

Dickens as Moralist

Forster in his biography of Dickens lays greater stress on the moral aim of his novels than on their literary merit. Dickens was the Family Novelist of the Victorians, and he was proud of the role. Though he was accepted as the Family Novelist in every home primarily because he was such a delightful entertainer, his value as a wholesome moral teacher was not the least of the factors in the selection. Dickens was no believer in the theory of 'art for art's sake'. He took a more serious view of art and of the artist's duties to the public. And in the case of Dickens the novelist, the bond

between him and his public had become a personal one because of the serial manner of his publications. He regarded himself, especially after he had become a great public figure, as the conscience of the people. He wrote his novels, therefore, with the definite purpose of helping the community to discover itself. The overwhelming popularity of his novels in his own day and in ours is proof enough that he fulfilled this function most successfully.

Though Dickens's moral teaching is implicit in every book he wrote, his affirmation of human values is more explicit in some than in others. Thus *Chuzzlewit* is a condemnation of selfishness and greed, *Dombey and Son* a condemnation of pride, and *Our Mutual Friend* an illustration of the corrupting influence of wealth on character. The core of his moral philosophy, however, is to be found in *A Christmas Carol* and may be summed up in unselfish love and generosity. Taine and many others of his way of thinking have fallen foul of Dickens for intruding morality and religion in his novels. There is no immutable law that forbids a novelist to be also a moralist. Moral or religious teaching does not necessarily vitiate a novel or any other form of art. All depends on the skill with which the teaching is integrated into the framework. As Forster says, Dickens never preaches directly, never sermonises. If Dickens's novels are not art as these theorists maintain, then a new definition of art will have to be invented to describe the enduring appeal of *A Christmas Carol* and the other Christmas stories.

Another charge commonly levelled against Dickens by modern critics is that he unquestioningly accepted Victorian social and moral conventions. There is no question of his deliberate acceptance of the Victorian traditions and values. He had imbibed them in his impressionable days and they were a part of his being. It has been remarked above that an important consideration with the Victorians in selecting Dickens as their Family Novelist was that he was a healthy influence not only because he awakened and strengthened in his readers the sleeping impulses of good, but also because he avoided 'sex'. Much fun is made these days of Victorian prudery. The Victorians were not sexless; they tabooed sex because they considered it indecorous. Besides, they regarded literature as a repository of civilized values. Those who read the sexy novels of Reynolds did so surreptitiously. Dickens was in complete agreement with his age in this matter, at least as a writer. If as a man he chafed under the stringent restraint imposed by the Victorian code of sexual morality, as he is reported to have done, especially after his affair with Ellen Ternan, he never for once deviated from the standard he had set himself as a writer with obligations to society. Where the exigencies of the story demand a sexual episode, as in Steerforth's seduction of Em'ly, he is careful to conform to the traditional code; Em'ly had disgraced herself and must suffer. She had violated the sacred Victorian convention that marriage alone sanctifies love.

In short, the Victorians had come to regard Dickens's novels as a school wherein to learn the sobrieties of life and the pieties of home.

By playing up to their expectation he enriched himself as well as the English novel.

Dickens as Social Reformer

Besides being a moral teacher, Dickens was also a social reformer. Social reform became an increasing preoccupation in his later career as novelist and journalist. He called his weekly *Household Words* "a gentle mouthpiece of reform." Though not always gentle, his articles had that "bright approach" which made his scathing attacks palatable to his readers. Through *Household Words* and the later *All the Year Round* he carried a vigorous campaign for Free Trade, abolition of Corn Laws, improvement of sanitation, etc. He was also a powerful speaker and supplemented his articles with public speeches. A subtler and more effective propaganda, however, was that made through his novels: *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*. His exposures of social evils in these had a powerful impact on public mind, and the reforms which followed in their wake either swiftly or tardily must, in a large measure, be credited to him.

Though "Oliver asking for more" has passed into a legend amounting to history, Dickens's satire on Bumbledom did not effect much improvement in the administration of workhouses until long afterwards. The sale of workhouse children as chimney-sweeps was, however, stopped in 1875. With *Nicholas Nickleby*, success was immediate. Private Schools of the Dotheboys (Do-the-boys) type with brutal schoolmasters like Squeers were swept out of existence. His exposures of sweated labour amidst appalling dirt and squalor of industrial Midlands and North in *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Hard Times* had also a marked effect in producing steady though slow improvement of factory laws. Hours of work were limited to ten with Saturday as half-day. The laws' delays proved the hardest nut of all and *Bleak House* caused no more than a faint ripple in the sluggish stream of the court of Chancery.

Little Dorrit like *Nicholas Nickleby* had swift success. In the preface to a later edition of *Pickwick* Dickens wrote: "The laws relating to imprisonment for debt are altered, and the Fleet Prison is pulled down!" The Marshalsea in which Dickens's father had been a prisoner years before was demolished in 1842, i.e. some fifteen years before *Little Dorrit* (1855-57). That is why the story was antedated to 1820s when it was still in existence. Imprisonment for debt was abolished in 1869 a year before Dickens died. How effective his attack on vested interests represented by the Barnacles and the Civil Service manned by them was, may be gauged from the fact that the Circumlocution Office has become a byword for obstructive incompetence of bureaucracy everywhere.

Paradoxically enough, though Dickens was a democrat and a radical democrat at that, he did not believe in democracy. In a speech some months before his death he said: "My faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal. My faith in the

people governed is, on the whole, illimitable." For all his denunciation of capitalism and capitalists, however, he was never a socialist. Socialism means state enterprise, action by government officials in whom he had no trust. Nor had he any faith in Parliament (he dubbed it "The Great Dust Heap down at Westminster" and its members "the national dustmen") or other institutions. Though burning with indignation at the callous indifference of the ruling class, Dickens never approved of violent agitation. The picture of mob violence in *The Old Curiosity Shop* provides unmistakable evidence of his pacifism. He was not unaware of the violent revolutions that shook Europe in midcentury. He believed in the power of words both written and spoken and won his battles by creating through them a climate of public opinion favourable to reform. He literally spoke and wrote and laughed his way into the hearts of the people. Bernard Shaw was so impressed by *Little Dorrit* that he thought it was a more seditious book than Marx's *Das Capital*.

The power of Dickens's later novels dominated by social themes derives to a great extent from their symbolic background. The symbolic significance of fog in *Bleak House* is too striking to escape notice. The symbolism in other novels, if less striking, is nevertheless a pervasive and recurring feature. The picture that Dickens builds up of London's ugliness, squalor and desolation is an integral part of the novels. It symbolises the threat that rapid industrialisation poses to man, as for example, in such studies as *Dickens and Crime* (1962) and *Dickens and Education* (1963), both by Phillip Collins.

In spite of the wide acceptance and keen appreciation of Dickens as a social reformer, critical noises are still made to accuse him of disloyalty to his art. The answer to this charge is, of course, the same as that given to the charge of his introducing morality in his novels. There is no reason why a novelist should be debarred from voicing social criticism in his novels. The only condition is that he should possess the skill to work his criticism into the texture of his story. That Dickens had that skill admits of no doubt. Whoever reads Dickens reads him for entertainment and not for his ideas of reform. The ideas are subordinate to entertainment and hence their effectiveness. Dickens, like Shaw later, defied critical theorists and their arty flim flam about objectivity. They found surer guide in their instincts and they followed them with remarkable success, one as a novelist, the other as a dramatist. No writer is completely objective. Matthew Arnold's sonnet notwithstanding, even Shakespeare was not completely objective.

Faults and Shortcomings of Dickens

It is rather uncharitable to point out the faults of such a writer as the dear old Dickens. 'Critic' and 'Criticism' have in course of time acquired wide—and innocent—meanings; but unfortunately the odour of fault-finding—the meaning of the verb 'criticize'—still hangs over them. With such an apology the literary historian may proceed to discharge the duty of examining the faults alleged against

Dickens. They are: (a) that his English is slipshod, marred by prolixity and syntactical mistakes, etc; (b) that his novels are loose in construction; are lacking in unity and close organisation; (c) that his range is limited, being confined to the lower-middle and lower classes to the exclusion of upper classes; (d) that he is lacking in higher thought and philosophy; and (e) that his novels are out of date, being mere documentaries of bygone period.

In any discussion of his faults, two handicaps of Dickens must always be borne in mind: first, that his education was irregular and inadequate; second, that his novels were published serially in monthly or weekly parts. Much of what is faulty in Dickens can be traced to these drawbacks; but may it not be, as his enthusiastic admirers have pointed out that much of his excellence too derives from the same source, that his very disadvantages were boons. "He was an uneducated man of genius", says Angus Wilson, "and as such was free and open to intuitive responses to the facts of the age which a better conventional education might have refused." In simpler words, Dickens, a graduate of the streets, saw life more clearly and responded to its challenges more naturally and spontaneously than would have been possible if he had been a university graduate. Of the other handicap, Priestley* says that the serial manner of publication compelled him "to work at a speed and with an urgency that released the unconscious elements upon which genius depends." This means that the urgency imposed by the monthly instalments threw him on the resources of his 'unconscious' and thus brought out the best in him.

To return to the faults: (a) Prolixity and occasional lapses of grammar, etc. are admitted. Considering his vast output and the speed, the faults are trivial. In any case, only pedants notice them. Dickens was not writing for a tribe of grammarians.

(b) Loose construction of the novels is easily explained by their serial publication. Since he had to be ready with his monthly instalment by a fixed date, he wrote as the mood moved him, without any advance planning. The technical defect resulting from this was, however, more than compensated by the excellence of his invention, its spontaneity, freshness, and variety. Thomas Hardy and Henry James, famous for their mastery of technique, have never attained to the popularity of Dickens. The average reader is not a literary technician.

(c) It is true that Dickens pictured only the lower-middle and lower classes and gave a wide berth to the upper classes. Not that there are no lords and ladies and aristocrats in his books. We have the Dedlocks and the Barnacles and some others, but they are there to be scorned and laughed at. It is wrong to say that he did not know the upper classes. He was on intimate terms with the highest in the land including Queen Victoria to whom he presented a specially bound set of his novels. If he did not write about them, however, it may have been

*Quoted in the *Dickens Centenary Volume*.

because he did not know enough about them to write with conviction. To this extent he is less universal than Shakespeare who could speak for prince as well as peasant with equal facility. Having made this admission one may well wonder whether the essential humanity of a peasant is in any significant particular different from that of the prince. This question again does not bother the common reader.

(d) As regards the absence in his novels of higher thought and philosophy, it is enough to say that if his message of simple, open-hearted friendliness and generosity is not high enough, then a higher gospel than Christ's will have to be written.

(e) The complaint that his novels are out-dated is invalidated by their continued popularity a hundred years after his death. The reason is that Dickens caught the essentials of character and situation and by his art transfigured them, fixed them for ever. Otherwise how to account for the popularity of Dickens in America where there were no stage coaches, no Bumbledom and no court of Chancery? And how about his popularity in countries of the East like India with history, customs and traditions so different from England? It is the externals, the non-essentials that change; the essential, the fundamental, the type remains. Vincent Crummles and his theatrical troupe still existed and travelled by road in 1920s, as shown in Priestley's *The Good Companions*. If any still remain, they must now be travelling by train. Tony Weller may now be a taxi-driver and Mrs. Gamp a charwoman. And those rare birds, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller—who knows one may by lucky accident meet them in a big World Fair in London or some other metropolis. It is this quality that distinguishes imaginative literature from the merely documentary.

Dickens as a Man of Letters

While Dickens's popularity as a novelist has never been in doubt, his excellence as a man of letters, a literary artist, has only been recognised in recent times.

For nearly 60 years after his death, critics depreciated Dickens as an artist, even when they admitted that he was the most popular novelist. Among these were Taine, the noted French critic, G.H. Lewis, 'husband' of George Eliot, and Sir Leslie Stephen, father of Virginia Woolf—all of the later 19th century. In the early 20th century and especially in the years following the first World War, Dickens was caught in the anti-romantic hysteria which decried everything Victorian. Sophisticated critics like Virginia Woolf and Robert Graves ran him down by propagating the idea that he was read only by the lower middle classes. Such criticism did succeed in keeping off some pretenders to culture from Dickens, but it did not diminish his popularity among the great mass of educated readers.

The tide turned around the 30s. During the last four decades critical estimate of Dickens has gone up steadily. Critics both in

England and in America are now agreed that he is not only the greatest English novelist but also an accomplished craftsman. In their reassessment they have discovered more significance in his later novels. These, they say, are not only better constructed than the earlier ones but they are also more relevant to our times than the novels of any other Victorian writer. This, of course, refers to Dickens's social criticism of all forms of humbug in his later novels—this being in tune with the modern revolt against the Establishment. Moreover, the symbolism of these novels implicit in its exposure of the evils of industrial development, has acquired greater force today in view of the aggravation by latest advances in science and technology.

Dickens was a born writer who found in his early career as a journalist just the opportunities he needed for the blossoming of his peculiar gifts. He may be said to have reached his peak with *David Copperfield*. The later novels show deeper understanding, but with the exception of the *Christmas Books* and *Great Expectations*, they are on a lower level of excellence than the earlier ones. Modern preference for his later novels may prove a temporary phase, for it is doubtful if *Pickwick* and its near companions can ever be dislodged from their primacy in popular estimation.

As Forster in his evaluation of Dickens's novels has remarked, they are more distinguished for their moral content than for their literary excellence. Dickens was certainly more keen on putting his message across than on excelling as a stylist. Nevertheless, apart from occasional clumsiness, his prose style possesses qualities of excellence hard to match in any but the greatest masters of prose. The storm scene in *David Copperfield*, the opening scene of the coach drive to Dover in *A Tale of Two Cities*, the death scene of Paul Dombey in *Dombey and Son*—to name only a few—are not only among the finest things in Dickens but they are also comparable to the finest things elsewhere in English prose.

However, the special distinction of Dickens's style, that which marks him out from all other novelists is its virility, its robustness. He writes with a gusto which carries the reader along with him through the whole complex of his story—excitement, suspense, drama, melodrama, humour, sentiment, grotesquerie—with the compelling force of a dynamo.

Dickens' Popularity

The one hard fact that emerges from all that has been written about Dickens is his prodigious popularity. Numerous editions of his works and their staggering sales make him easily the topmost and best-selling novelist in the world. There must be some explanation for this soaring popularity. The feeling he leaves on one's mind is one of exaltation. There are many other novelists who, too, like Dickens are on the side of the angels; but Dickens does something to you that no other novelist does. It is a mysterious, almost supernatural, quality in his writing that makes a different man of

you. In an article on Dickens in *John O'London* some years ago the author wrote something to this effect: "If a visitor happens to tell me that he doesn't like Dickens I feel like locking up my silver and phoning the police." That about sums up the strength of general feeling about Dickens among his admirers. And their number is legion. As Mr. Tomlin says: "If spiritually we are all Semites, literally we are all (or nearly all) Dickensians, even if for different and sometimes conflicting reasons". (*The Dickens Centenary Volume*, p. 242). It is beautifully put, but the statement is a little narrow. Why only Semites? Hindus (including Budhists, Jains, Sikhs, etc.) are not Semites, but they are as staunch Dickensians as the Semites. Incidentally, it is remarkable how Christmas, once a festival only of Christians, has become popular in its non-ritualistic aspect—among non-Christian communities—all because of *A Christmas Carol* and the Christmas festivities at Dingley Dell in *Pickwick Papers*.

Though Dickens cannot be caged in a formula, it is safe to say that these two books contain the entire secret of his world-wide popularity. At his death the *Times* called him the Great Commoner of English Letters. Considering that he has burst national and religious boundaries and reached where no writer has reached before or since, a more fitting title for him would be the Great Commoner of Universal Letters. As a genius Dickens ranks second to Shakespeare, but as a popular writer he ranks first. For, while Shakespeare is accessible to a few, Dickens is open to all. Two of Dickens's novels are summarised below.

David Copperfield. David Copperfield was born shortly after the death of his father. His mother a gentle, weak-willed woman married again but her second husband Mr. Murdstone and his sister by their cruel treatment drove her to an early grave. They applied the same methods in the education of Copperfield at home, and he reacted by becoming recalcitrant and learnt nothing. He was mercilessly flogged by Mr. Murdstone which resulted in his falling into a fever. On recovering, he was sent to school, where he was tyrannised by the brutal headmaster Creakle, but made two friends: the brilliant, high-spirited and well-to-do Steerforth and the good humoured, poor and plodding Traddles. His mother having died, he was withdrawn from school and sent to London to work in Murdstone's wine warehouse. Here he was employed in the menial job of washing empty bottles and pasting labels on full ones. He was lodged in the house of the middle-aged shabby genteel Mr. Micawber, who was always in financial difficulties but ever kept hoping that something would turn up. When Copperfield visited him in a debtors' prison, Mr. Micawber enunciated to him his now famous financial philosophy "that if a man had twenty pounds a year for his income, and spent nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and six pence, he would be happy, but that if he spent twenty pounds one he would be miserable."

Disgusted with his humiliating toil Copperfield made the despe-

rate resolution to seek refuge with his aunt Miss Betsy Trodwood, an eccentric old lady who had lost all interest in him because, contrary to her expectation, he was born a boy and not a girl. After walking five days he reached Dover, penniless and exhausted. To his great joy and relief he was taken up by the aunt and sent to school at Canterbury. Here under Dr Strong he made rapid progress in his studies and after a time was articled to Mr. Spenlow of the solicitors' firm of Spenlow and Jorkins. He lived in the house of Mr. Wickfield his aunt's lawyer who was looked after by his daughter Agnes, a sweet, capable and noble-minded girl. She loved Copperfield but he ignored her, having fallen madly in love with Spenlow's daughter, the adorable Dora with the lovely curls. He became secretary to his old tutor Dr Strong, learnt shorthand, and began to write. He was determined to win Dora at all costs.

Going to London on a holiday Copperfield in his boyish enthusiasm introduced Steerforth to the family of his old nurse Clara Peggotty for whom he had carried the cryptic marriage proposal of his cab driver Barkis: "Barkis is willin." After Peggotty had become Mrs. Barkis, the Peggotty family consisted of Mr. Peggotty a Yarmouth fisherman, his nephew Ham, Ham's cousin the beautiful Little Em'ly and Mrs. Gummidge, a widow always lamenting her forlorn condition. Em'ly was engaged to Ham, but fascinated by Steerforth she ran away with him. Mr. Peggotty set out in search and ultimately traced her to London. She had been taken to the continent and there deserted. Steerforth was drowned in a shipwreck in Yarmouth harbour and Ham met his death trying to rescue him.

Meanwhile Copperfield had married Dora who died after a few years of married happiness. She was an incompetent housekeeper and took no interest in her husband's literary work. Realisation of his mistake in rejecting the love of Agnes now dawned upon Copperfield. Returning from abroad after three years he married her. Her father had in the meanwhile been ruined by a rascally clerk, the 'umble Uriah Heep. His swindles were exposed by Micawber who had become his clerk. He was later involved in a bank robbery and was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr. Peggotty, Little Em'ly, Mrs. Gummidge and the Micawbers emigrated to Australia where Em'ly devoted herself to charitable works and Mr. Micawber became a magistrate. Traddles became a barrister and Copperfield won fame and fortune in the world of literature.

Great Expectations. The novel is principally a study of the development of the character of a village boy Pip. He is brought up by his shrewish sister who is married to a gentle, good-humoured blacksmith Joe Gargery. He is introduced to Satis Home presided over by Miss Havisham, an eccentric old lady driven crazy by her husband's deserting her on her bridal night. She is always in her bridal dress. She has brought up the girl Estella to use her beauty for tormenting men in revenge for their faithlessness. Pip falls in love with Estella, but in order to win her he must first be a gentleman.

He receives money from a mysterious source and builds 'expectations' of more from Miss Havisham, believing her to be his anonymous patron. He goes to London and in his new role of gentleman ignores Joe Gargery, his brother-in-law, as a low connection of whom he is now ashamed. His hopes are, however, soon shattered by the discovery that his anonymous benefactor is an ex-convict Abel Magwitch whose life he had saved as a boy providing food. Money supply being cut off—for he cannot accept aid from a convict—he is reduced to his original condition and returns to Joe and honest labour at the forge. Estella marries his hated rival Bentley Drummle who ill-treats her cruelly. She has also learnt her lesson and Pip is at last united to her.

The comedy is supplied by Pip's uncle Pumblechook, Mr. Wopsle and Biddy, grand-daughter of Wopsle's great aunt—a relationship not easy for Pip's mind to register. Mrs. Gargery is also memorable if only for bringing up Pip 'by hand' and for being careful that he shall not be 'pompeyed' (pampered). Poor Joe shows remarkable patience and good humour in the face of that termagant's explosions of temper for which his coinage is "on the Rampage." Perhaps the most delightful oddity is Mr. Wemmick, assistant to the criminal lawyer Mr. Jaggers. He lives at Walworth and works in Little Britain in the city. He has a castle in Walworth complete with ramparts, a draw bridge and a cannon; but since he has a Walworth mind and a Little Britain mind which must never meet—he clean forgets the castle and the ramparts, etc. the moment he steps into his place of business and "his mouth tightened into a post office again." And, however wildly incredible Miss Havisham might appear, she is an invaluable part of the comedy.

Pip's character illustrates the tragedy of false pride. As hero he cuts a sorry figure and is not at all loveable. His rejection of the good, gentle Joe is mean snobbery. In spite of the romantic pathos of his childhood, nobody except Dickens could take him for another David Copperfield. In fact, Magwitch, the convict, is a more truly pathetic character. Even Hubert Pocket, Pip's London pal is a more attractive character than Pip. All this makes the conclusion of the story very unsatisfactory. Dickens's original intention was to leave Pip high and dry—a lonely man—but against his better judgment he gave the story a happy ending in deference to the suggestion of Bulwer Lytton.

Some critics have found in Pip's frustrations a projection of Dickens's own marital difficulties. This seems rather far-fetched. The strength of the novel derives not from any autobiographical elements or from the character of the hero, but from humour, pathos and characterisation, in all of which *Great Expectations* takes its place beside *David Copperfield*.

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-63) was the son of a Collector in Bengal in the service of the East India Company and was born in Calcutta. His father died when he was only five and his mother marrying again, he was sent home to the care of an aunt. After

attending several private schools he was sent to the famous Charterhouse school. From there he went to Trinity College, Cambridge but after less than two years left the University without a degree. He went to Weimar and Paris to learn German and French. At Weimar he met Goethe then in his old age. He studied painting for which he had some ability but soon discovered he couldn't succeed in that line. When he offered to illustrate Dickens's novels the offer was declined. Then he went to the Middle Temple to study law, which also he gave up after sometime. In 1832, when he came of age, he came into a small fortune worth £500 a year. This he soon wasted in running newspapers, speculation and gambling. He married in 1836 but his married happiness was short-lived, for in 1840 his wife became insane and was put into a mental hospital. He found comfort in the friendship of a married lady but only at the cost of discomfort to the lady's husband. Faced for the first time with the problem of earning a living he joined the staff of *Frazer's Magazine* to which he contributed satirical sketches, the most notable being *Yellowplush Papers*, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, *Catherine* and *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*. He was also a regular contributor to *Punch*. Of the *Punch* contributions the best known are *The Book of Snobs* and *Punch's Prize Novelists*.

After ten years of this apprenticeship appeared his magnum opus *Vanity Fair* (1848) which won him instant recognition as a novelist of the first rank. This was followed by *Pendennis* (1850), *Esmond* (1852), *The Newcomes* (1855), and *The Virginians* (1859). All these were published in serial parts; the dates above given are those of publication in book form. (Thackeray gave a series of lectures on *The English Humorists in the Eighteenth Century* (published 1853) and on *The Four Georges* (published 1860). He made a lecturing tour of America in 1852. From 1860 to 1862 he edited *The Cornhill Magazine* in which were published the miscellaneous essays entitled *The Roundabout Papers* and the shorter novels *Lovel the Widower*, *The Adventures of Philip* and *Denis Duval* (unfinished). Mention may also be made of Thackeray's *Christmas Books* (1857) which contain reprints of such humorous and fanciful pieces as *Mrs. Perkin's Ball* and *The Rose and the Ring*.

Thackeray's eldest daughter Ann, Lady Ritchie (1837-1919), wrote novels and his youngest daughter Harriet was married to Leslie Stephen.

(Thackeray's earlier and immature works are exercises in satirical humour, his one weapon of attack on snobbery and on exaltation of criminals. In the *Yellowplush Papers* a footman (Mr. Yellowplush) recounts his experiences. *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* relates the misfortunes of Mr. Samuel Titmarsh who was given a diamond by his aunt. After temporary prosperity he falls into the hands of swindlers and lands in jail. He is rescued by his wife. *Catherine* and *Barry Lyndon* are more vigorous. The first is based on Catherine Hayes who was executed for the murder of her husband. In the second *Barry Lyndon*, an 18th century Irish adventurer, complacently

relates his criminal exploits as though they were deeds of noble heroism. *The Book of Snobs* can still be read with pleasure, for though it describes the various kinds of English snobs in the Victorian period, snobbery is not dead. In fact in one form or another it is a perennial feature of all societies. In *Punch's Prize Novelists* Thackeray satirises such novelists as Bulwar Lytton, Charles Lever, G.P.R. James and Disraeli who romanticised and idolised dandies and criminals. His later novels published in the *Cornhill Magazine* (*Lovel the Widower*, etc.) are repetitive showing declining powers.

Of Thackeray's five major novels only three have survival value: *Vanity Fair*, *Esmond* and *The Newcomes*. *Vanity Fair* is the best known and *Esmond* the finest of his novels, though some would place *The Newcomes* at the head.

Vanity Fair. The novel traces the sharply contrasted careers of two girls Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley. Becky is the orphan daughter of a poor artist and a French opera dancer, while Amelia is the daughter of a rich businessman who lives in Russel Square. Becky is clever, witty, ambitious and unscrupulous, while Amelia is gentle, innocent and simple-minded. After leaving Miss Pinkerton's Academy where both have been studying, Amelia invites Becky to spend a few days with her before taking up her situation as governess at Queen's Crawley, the countryhouse of Sir Pitt Crawley. Becky sets her cap at the fat Jos Sedley, Amelia's brother and ex-Collector of Boggyley Wallah, but fails in her attempt. At Queen's Crawley she captivates the mean and rascally Sir Pitt and insinuates herself into the graces of Sir Pitt's sister, the rich Miss Crawley. On the death of Lady Crawley Sir Pitt proposes to Becky, but is astonished to learn that she has secretly married his second son Rawdon Crawley, a worthless army officer, gambler and duellist. The revelation infuriates Miss Crawley who cuts off Rawdon from her inheritance.

Meanwhile Amelia too suffers a set back. Her father has been ruined by speculation and she is heartbroken because her fiance George Osborne has been forbidden by his mercenary and snobbish father to marry her. Captain Dobbin, an awkward but tender-hearted worshipper of Amelia and a close and devoted friend of George from their school days, urges him to appreciate such a love as Amelia's and marry her. Accordingly George defies his father and marries Amelia. Old Osborne promptly disinherits him and George walks out of the house. While they are at Brighton for their honeymoon news comes that Napoleon has returned and that the British army has been ordered to Belgium. Soon after, the principal characters in the story flock to Brussels and in the gaiety that reigned there before Waterloo Becky outshines all other ladies. George becomes her slave and cruelly neglects his wife. In the battle of Waterloo, George is killed. Poor Amelia is brought back to London by the faithful Dobbin and settles down to a quiet life in a little villa. She consoles herself with her little son—for she is now a mother—but takes no notice of Dobbin's love for her. Such is the state of affairs when Dobbin leaves for India.

Becky, also the mother of a son remains for a time in Paris reveling in that city's life of fashion and luxury. Though both husband and wife know to perfection the art of living well on nothing a year, they return to London to seek some avenue for Rawdon's advancement. Becky is not slow to ingratiate herself with Rawdon's elder brother Pitt who, now married, is master at Queen's Crawley after his father's death. The major portion of Miss Crawley's wealth has also come to him. She moves and shines with the highest circles and through Pitt's wife Lady Jane gets herself presented at Court. Determined to rise at any cost she gets too friendly with Lord Steyne who wields great influence. One evening Rawdon on returning home finds him with Becky in compromising circumstances. Though otherwise a worthless character Rawdon has a sense of honour. Outraged he strikes his lordship on the face and ripping off the glittering jewels from Becky's neck and arms he throws them on the floor. One strikes him on the forehead and leaves a scar which he is to bear to the end of his days. Convinced that Becky has been receiving money and jewellery without his knowledge he breaks with her and leaves the house. Ironically enough he reads in the next day's paper news of his appointment as a governor which Becky has solicited from Lord Steyne. The governorship is in the tropics and Rawdon goes there an exile. Amelia continues to live with her parents sharing their life of poverty lightened only by her son. She has to part even with him when she sends him to live with his grandfather in exchange for some financial support. Then one day Dobbin, now a Major and returned home after ten years, calls and presses his suit. But she though grateful cannot accept his proposal for she still cherishes George's memory. Jos Sedley returning to London and finding Amelia in such poor straits proposes a holiday on the continent. So he, Amelia, George junior and Dobbin set out on a tour of Europe. In Baden they meet Becky who has come there after sojourning in many continental capitals—a faded, sad, lonely figure but still charming. She had divined Dobbin's love for Amelia and in a surprising mood of magnanimity shows her a letter written by George Osborne on the eve of Waterloo asking Becky to run away with him. Amelia is at last disillusioned about her idol and finally marries Dobbin.

Becky remains abroad with Jos who at his death leaves his life insurance to be divided between her and Amelia. In course of time Becky's son inherits the Crawley estate and though he makes her a generous allowance he refuses to see her. She eventually returns to England and devotes herself to good works at Bath.

The title of the novel is borrowed from the vanity fair of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This fair has booths selling all sorts of vanities and is full of cheats, fools and rogues of all kinds. In Becky's adventurous career through this fair we see all the vices Thackeray associated with snobs. The book is a sustained satire on the hypocrisies and affectations of the upper classes. Thackeray had a keen eye for social pretension and his satire pierces these hypocrisies and exposes the sordid reality of meanness, greed, selfishness and lust

that lies hidden behind a facade of elegant glitter. Our attention is especially focussed on the power of money and the power of sexual attraction.

While the book has many exciting scenes—notably Sir Pitt's falling down at Becky's feet and Rawdon's encounter with Lord Steyne—its chief merit is in its objective and impartial characterisation. The satire is sharp but not bitter and its moral is natural, unforced. As a realist, Thackeray denies us the deluding comfort of a conventional happy ending, and the book concludes appropriately with the explanation: "Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! which of us is happy in this world! Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?"

The sub-title of *Vanity Fair*, 'a novel without a hero' was an attack on novelists like Bulwar Lytton and Ainsworth who idolised bandits and murderers—a practice which Thackeray considered not only false but dangerous. Not only is there no hero in *Vanity Fair*, there is no heroine either in the conventional sense. It is only by stretching a point that the novel's supreme character Becky Sharp can be called its heroine.

The same realism characterises *Pendennis*, but the satire here is more indulgent than in *Vanity Fair*. Arthur Pendennis, the nominal hero, has nothing very heroic about him. He is a young man of an old family, whose earlier career closely resembles that of Thackeray. He is neither very good nor very bad, "neither angel nor imp" in Thackeray's words. He is truthful, honest and frank but vain, weak-willed and essentially selfish. The novel highlights this hateful selfishness. His vacillation in his three love entanglements is also very irritating. The world of *Pendennis* has its bad characters in Sir Francis Clavering and Col. Altamont the ex-convict, but the satire is relieved by such good characters as the saintly Helen Pendennis, mother of Arthur, and the patient and steadfast Laura whom Arthur eventually marries. Besides, the satire is also diluted by the presence of many humorous characters.

The Newcomes is a sequel to *Pendennis*, but unlike most sequels it is more powerful than its predecessor. The story which purports to be told by Pendennis relates the career of Clive Newcome, a generous lad with human weaknesses. He is the son of Col. Thomas Newcome of the Indian army, one of the finest gentlemen in English fiction. His characterisation reflects the innate goodness and gentleness of Thackeray's own heart. Clive is in love with his cousin Ethel Newcome, the daughter of the rich banker Sir Brian Newcome. His love is, however, frustrated by Ethel's grandmother Countess of Kew who has more ambitious designs for her granddaughter. The greatest opponent of Clive's suit is Ethel's brother Barnes Newcome in whom Thackeray has drawn an incredibly nasty villain. Ethel is a fine girl and though for a time she yields to the worldly influences of her family and becomes engaged first to one and then to another noble lord, she breaks off both the engagements. Her courageous resistance to family pressures makes her a very interesting character. Clive Newcome despairing of Ethel is trapped into marriage with Rosey

(Being an avowed moralist, Thackeray frequently steps aside and delivers a lecture. If some readers find these preaching interludes irritating, they can skip them. Others object to them on the ground that they lessen the dramatic force of characterisation. This is true, but whatever the loss to dramatic objectivity, it is more than made up by gain in self-revelation. In fact, the moral comments are an integral part of Thackeray's personality and style, and his novels would not be the same in their absence.)

The Bronte Sisters

The excessive interest in the Brontes shown by enthusiasts has produced an impression of their importance which is out of all proportion to their merits. The peculiar circumstances of their life and work hardly justify the amount of attention devoted to them in theses and special studies. The Bronte family had six children, five daughters—Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Emily and Anne—and a son Branwell. The father, of Irish origin, was parson of Haworth in a lonely moorland district of Yorkshire. A gloomy, self-centred man, he remained at Haworth till his death in 1861 surviving all his children. The mother died in 1822 and an aunt took over the household. The children lived an isolated life cut off from society and diverted themselves with roaming the wild moors and writing. The three elder girls were sent to a charity school for the daughters of clergymen. What this school was like may be guessed from the fact that Maria and Elizabeth died of malnutrition, cold and neglect, and Charlotte had only a narrow escape. It is pictured in Lowood Institute in *Jane Eyre*. At fifteen, Charlotte was sent to another school where she later became teacher with Emily and Anne as pupils. After trying school-teaching and 'governessing' the girls thought of opening a school of their own. As this required a knowledge of foreign languages, Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels where they joined Professor Heger's institute. The death of the aunt the same year (1842) brought them back home. Emily took over household duties and Charlotte returned to Brussels as teacher of English in the Heger institute. She fell in love with Professor Heger who, however, made no response. After a year or so Charlotte returned home unhappy.

In 1846, the sisters published a joint volume of *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*. It received little notice. Only Emily showed some poetic fire. Her poems have already been considered. Then the girls took to novel writing. Charlotte's first novel *The Professor* could not get into print. Then came *Jane Eyre* (1847) on which her fame rests. It is a personal record of trials and sufferings relieved towards the end by the pathetic romance of the heroine's marrying the blind and crippled hero. The book was attacked by the old-fashioned for the impropriety of the hero's planning a bigamous union and the heroine's approval of it as honourable. On the other hand, the sophisticated or 'advanced' readers hailed it for its modernity—the modernity consisting in the heroine's bold assertion of

woman's equality with man. *Shirley* (1849) is a portrait of Emily and *Villette* (1853) a faithful record of Charlotte's stay at Brussels. The *Professor* was published posthumously (1857). Charlotte Brontë's limitations are obvious. She lacked the imagination necessary for transmitting personal experience into art. She married her father's curate at the age of 38 and died the following year.

Emily Brontë's only novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is something unique in English fiction. If Charlotte Brontë's novels are all autobiography untouched by imagination, Emily Brontë's novel is all imagination unrelated to life or experience. The result is a nightmare of horror dominated by the fiery passions of love and hate. The background indeed is real in its most concrete details, but the main figure and his actions are too demoniac to be human.

Anne Brontë's novels *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Agnes Grey* are, like Charlotte's, personal records, but they are on a lower level of achievement showing lack both of strength and of experience.

To complete the Brontë history it may be stated that Branwell, the scapegrace brother, ruined himself by dissipation and died in 1848.

Jane Eyre. Jane Eyre, an orphan, is grossly illtreated by her aunt and excluded from games and other enjoyments by her three spoilt children. A girl of spirit, one day when she is unjustly punished for being 'deceitful' she defies the aunt and is sent to Lowood Institute. Life at this school is no improvement. Ill-fed, ill-clothed and subjected to rigorous spiritual discipline among eighty children, she remains there eight years, last two as a teacher. She gets her release from this wretched school by obtaining the post of governess at Thornfield Hall. Her pupil is Miss Adele Varens, eight-year-old ward of Mr. Rochester, a kindly person with a tough exterior. Jane develops tender feelings for him and his attitude to her, aloof and formal at first, gradually becomes friendly and familiar. Learning that her aunt has had a stroke at hearing that her profligate son John has committed suicide, Jane visits her. The aunt makes two confessions: first, that she had not brought her up as her own child according to her promise, and second, that she had kept to herself a letter received three years before from Jane's uncle in Madeira saying he wanted to adopt his niece. After a month she returns to Thornfield Hall where preparations are afoot for Mr. Rochester's marriage with the flashing beauty Miss Ingram. Distressed at the prospect Jane decides to depart. When Rochester insists on her staying she can no longer control her feelings and blurts out, "Ah! I tell you I must go! Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? Do you think that because I am poor and plain, I have no soul, no feelings? If God had gifted me with wealth and beauty, I would have made it as hard for you to have left me. It is my spirit that speaks to you now, as though equal at God's foot with yours." This plain speaking clinches the issue and Rochester asks her to be his wife.

Their wedding is, however, broken up by the revelation that he is

married and that his wife is living. Reckless in exposure he admits he has been married fifteen years to Bertha Mason, who being mad is kept in his house under lock and key. Rochester justifies his bigamous plan and though she is willing to accept his explanation Jane cannot overcome her moral scruples and runs away from Thornfield Hall. She finds refuge with the family of Mr. St. John Rivers through whom she comes to know that her uncle has left her heir to a fortune of £20,000. She rejects Mr. Rivers's proposal of marriage and instinctively returns to Thornfield Hall only to find it in burnt ruins and Mr. Rochester stone blind and crippled. The sad story of events during her absence is told her by the host of the inn. Mrs. Rochester had set fire to the room next to hers and to Jane's room. When Rochester went to fetch his wife she climbed to the battlements and leapt to her death on the pavement. He was crushed when the mansion collapsed and lost his sight and an arm.

Jane marries him. He regains the sight in one eye two years after their marriage.

Wuthering Heights. Wuthering Heights is a farm-house high up in the wild moors of Yorkshire in the early 19th century. Mr Earnshaw brings home a dirty, ragged foundling Heathcliff picked up from the slums of Liverpool. He is very fond of the child, but Hindley, his son, detests and bullies him. The younger Earnshaw child Catherine, however, is drawn towards him and they become fast friends. They are looked after by the housekeeper Nelly and an aged servant, the canting Joseph. After the death of old Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley becomes master of the estate and does everything in his power to insult and degrade Heathcliff. He dismisses his tutor and reduces him to the position of a serf. Catherine and Heathcliff join in rebellion against Hindley who marries and has a son. His wife dies and grief-stricken he takes to drink. Meanwhile, Heathcliff develops into a tall black-browed youth and Catherine into a beautiful girl, vivacious, wilful and passionate. Their common hatred for Hindley is a bond of union which is not simply love in the ordinary sexual sense but complete emotional and spiritual identification. In spite of this, however, Catherine betrays Heathcliff by marrying the cultured Edgar Linton, master of the neighbouring Thrushcross Grange. The first six months of her married life are happy and peaceful. Then suddenly reappears Heathcliff who had disappeared three years previously on hearing of Catherine's engagement to Edgar. He is now grown to full manhood, has better manners and is well provided with money. Catherine is delighted to see him but his visits make Edgar uneasy and angry, for Heathcliff treats him with unconcealed contempt. Edgar's sister Isabella becomes infatuated with Heathcliff and in spite of the warnings of Catherine and Edgar she elopes with him. Heathcliff has two burning passions, his love for Catherine and hatred for his enemies. He has now a hold on both Hindley and Edgar who has deprived him of his Catherine. He ruins Hindley by indulging his twin tastes for drinking and gambling until Hindley mortgages all his property to Heathcliff in payment of his gambling debts. His scheme of revenge on the Lintons begins with his marriage

to Isabella. He treats her with the greatest brutality so that she locks herself up in a room with the drink-sodden Hindley. In the meanwhile there is a terrible scene at Thrushcross Grange between Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar. Edgar returning from church finds Catherine in the arms of Heathcliff. Blows are struck and Heathcliff is forbidden the house. That very night Catherine gives birth to a seven months' child—a girl—and dies. In default of male heir the Linton property will go to Isabella and her children.

Catherine's death is a terrible blow to Heathcliff. Maddened with grief he becomes more brutal to Isabella until she escapes and settles in the south where after some months a son is born to her. Hindley dies and Heathcliff becomes master of Wuthering Heights. He degrades Hindley's son Hareton as Hindley had degraded *him*. But nothing that Heathcliff's malevolence can do deprives the boy of his native intelligence and good instincts.

Catherine's daughter, little Cathy, grows up into an exquisite beauty, in temper as wayward and rebellious as her mother. Isabella dies and her son Linton a sickly boy of sixteen is brought back to Wuthering Heights. Linton and Cathy meet and become attached to each other. Edgar ignorant of Linton's poor health does not object to the proposal of their marriage. Heathcliff, however, wants to hurry the marriage for fear lest his son should die before Edgar. Taking advantage of Edgar's illness Heathcliff kidnaps Cathy and marries her to Linton. She returns to Thrushcross Grange just in time, for Edgar dies soon after.

Edgar's death leaves Heathcliff master of Thrushcross Grange. He brings Cathy back to Wuthering Heights where Linton's condition deteriorates because Heathcliff now stops doctor's attendance on him. Cathy alone nurses him, but he dies not long after his father-in-law.

Being now in full possession of his enemies' properties and having their representatives completely in his power, Heathcliff's preoccupation with Catherine gains overwhelming ascendancy. While Edgar's grave is being dug beside Catherine's he goes to the churchyard at night, opens her coffin and for the last time looks on her face. He tells Nelly that since her death he has been straining to reach out to her spirit, but though she seems almost within reach she always eludes him. He becomes more and more queer, withdrawn and solitary. Meanwhile, Cathy and Hareton fall in love with each other. Cathy starts teaching him to read. When one day Heathcliff strikes Cathy, Hareton comes forward to defend her. This opens his eyes. He is reminded of his own relationship with Catherine. He loses all his will for revenge. One morning a little later he is found dead in Catherine's room.

Cathy and Hareton are going to marry and live at Thrushcross Grange. There are strange tales in the village that Heathcliff and Catherine have been seen roaming the moors at night.

In point of construction the novel is perfect. The bulk of the story

is narrated by Nelly to Lockwood, and the rest by Lockwood himself. The year is 1801. Lockwood, a gentleman from London and tenant of Thrushcross Grange, visits his landlord Heathcliff at Wuthering Heights. He is rudely received and is intrigued by the queer household which besides Heathcliff consists of Zillah the housekeeper, the rude servant Joseph, the uncouth Hareton and Cathy. Compelled by a snowstorm to pass the night in Catherine's room he has a terrible dream. He hears a tapping sound on the casement window. Thinking it is a branch of a tree, and failing to open the casement he breaks the glasspane and puts out his hand to catch the branch. Instead his fingers close on a little icy-chill hand. He tries to withdraw his hand but the cold hand clings to it and a child's voice cries: "Let me in: I'm Catherine Linton." Terrified he rubs the child's wrist on the broken pane until it bleeds. Still unable to shake off the hand he screams. The scream brings Heathcliff to the room. He is very angry at finding Lockwood there, but after listening to the dream he becomes greatly agitated and rushing to the window shouts: "Cathy, come in, come in." Lockwood returns to Thrushcross Grange seized with a chill and relates his strange experiences to Nelly. Nelly then narrates the story of Wuthering Heights.

The above is a bald outline of this history, and can give no adequate idea of the terrifying quality of the book. It is a veritable nightmare. The book has been variously judged. Some have placed it alongside of *Lear*, others have dismissed it as an absurd horror story. The latter is nearer the mark. Heathcliff is not a man but a monster. He is incredible.

Various interpretations of the novel have been put forward. One is that the wild moors are symbolic and the book is an exaltation of Nature over artificial elegance and culture. Another is that Heathcliff's revenge is symbolic of class war between the privileged and the unprivileged. And so on. But whatever the meaning or purpose of the novel, it is nullified by its excess. Sample the following speeches of Heathcliff:

While still a boy he talks of "painting the house-front with Hindley's blood."

After kidnapping Cathy and locking her up with his son he says to Nelly: "Had I been born where laws are less strict and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of those two as an evening's amusement."

Mrs. Gaskell (1810-65). Mrs. Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell wrote more than half a dozen novels and a biography of Charlotte Brontë. The important novels are: *Mary Barton* (1848), *Ruth* (1853), *Cranford* (1853), *North and South* (1855), *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), and *Wives and Daughters* (unfinished 1866). Of these *Cranford* is the best loved—a minor classic of English fiction. It is an idyllic picture of a small village based on the author's childhood experience of life at Knutsford near Manchester. Life at Cranford is dominated by ladies who being poor gentry practise, 'elegant economy'. There are

delightful portraits of these ladies: the Honourable and pompous Mrs. Jamieson, sister-in-law to the late Earl of Glenmire, the stern Miss Deborah Jenkyns, her younger sister the gentle Matilda (Miss Matty), and the gossiping Miss Pole, the purveyor of Cranford news to Miss Smith, the narrator of the story. The tragedy of Captain Brown who is run over by a train while absorbed in reading *Pickwick Papers*, the comedy of imaginary robberies following the visit of a conjuror, the flutter caused by the visit of Lady Glenmire which develops into a scandal when she marries the local surgeon with the vulgar name of Hoggins—these and allied affairs the authoress describes with sympathy, gay humour and tender pathos. The most memorable character is the old Miss Matty, who frustrated in love and ruined in fortune, is secretly helped by her friends to set up a shop for selling tea. Matters take a happy turn when her long lost brother Peter returns from India. He has enough to keep himself and Matty in comfort for the rest of their lives. He also succeeds in bringing about reconciliation between Mrs. Jamieson and Lady Glenmire, now Mrs. Hoggins, and so restores to Cranford its old peace and sociability.

Being the wife of a Unitarian minister of Manchester, Mrs. Gaskell knew at first hand the conditions of the working classes in an industrial city. She used this knowledge in *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855) which describe the struggles and sufferings of the mill hands with sympathy and insight. The first of these was written under the shadow of the death of her ten-month-old son, which may account for its gloomy and melodramatic character. It has been summed up as "seven death beds and a murder."

North and South has the same theme but its treatment is more subdued. A passionate love story is worked into each of these novels of social reform.

Mary Barton was the more successful of the two because of its topical interest. Coming as it did in 1848 the year of Chartist agitation, it was a disturbing and much discussed book.

Of the remaining novels which illustrate Mrs. Gaskell's various talent only *Ruth* stands out as another disturbing novel—disturbing for its time. Its theme is the moral innocence of a seduced girl whose atonement is effected through love and death. It anticipated *Tess* by nearly forty years and was harshly attacked by the orthodox and highly praised for its truth and moral beauty by the more liberal minded.

Her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) is one of the masterpieces of English biography. Some details of the family were resented (the father was still alive) and were withdrawn.

Recent criticism has tried to upgrade Mrs. Gaskell on grounds of her sociological appeal and psychological powers, but it is doubtful if general consensus will ever promote her from the second rank of novelists to the first. She possessed almost all the gifts of a novelist—story-telling, close observation, truthful reportage, psychological

penetration and sympathetic insight into character, humour and pathos—but assuredly they are not on the same level with those of Jane Austen, Dickens and Thackeray. Compared with Jane Austen alone whose influence is obvious in *Cranford*, Mrs. Gaskell is less minute in her details and far less satirical. On the other hand, she is more imbued with feeling.

Charles Reade (1814-84) became a fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford and was called to the bar, but he turned to literature and began as a dramatist. After producing some sensational plays he took to novel writing and produced nearly a score of novels of which the best known are: *It is Never too Late to Mend* (1856), *Hard Cash* (1863) and *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861). The first two are novels of social reform, concerned respectively with abuses in prisons and in lunatic asylums. He was a good story-teller but he relied too heavily on facts and documentation which for want of invention he exaggerated into melodrama. In *Hard Cash*, for example, the rascally and bankrupt banker Richard Hardie who has swindled the sea captain Dodd has his own son Alfred put into a lunatic asylum to prevent him from disclosing his misappropriation. Dodd who has lost all his "hard cash" becomes insane also, finds his way to the same asylum. Then follow the melodramatic exaggerations of the asylum's horrors. Similar exaggerations mark the brutalities to prisoners in *It is Never too Late to Mend*. By far the most popular of Reade's stories is *The Cloister and the Hearth*, a massive historical novel dealing with the chaotic period when Europe was emerging from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance.

The Cloister and the Hearth. The story placed in the 15th century was inspired by the author's reading of the life and *Colloquies* of Erasmus. Gerard, the son of a silk merchant of Tergou in Holland, is destined by his father for the church; but he falls in love with the beautiful Margaret, daughter of Peter Brandt, a poor scholar, and determines not to be a priest. He is betrothed to Margaret, but their marriage is prevented by the burgomaster (Mayor) who twenty years before had cheated Peter of his lands and who is now afraid of discovery. Gerard is imprisoned in a tower, but he escapes carrying with him the document which proves the burgomaster's fraud. He passes the night with Margaret in fear and trembling and then flees the country, deciding to go to Italy, there to make his fortune by his skill in writing. In his travels through Germany and Burgundy he meets with many exciting and dangerous adventures in inns and monasteries. In Italy, he receives the false news of Margaret's death which the burgomaster with the help of Gerard's two wicked brothers has contrived to send him. Broken hearted and in despair he plunges into a life of reckless dissipation and debauchery and then becomes a monk. Meanwhile, Margaret gives birth to a son (Gerard's) and is in utter despair because of Gerard's absence. Finally, he returns to his native town, is united to Margaret through the infant son, and accepts a benefice from the Princess Marie. Margaret often visits the vicarage but the relationship between her and Gerard is that of pure friendship. The burgomaster on his deathbed restores

her land to Margaret who is now a rich woman. Their son, we learn at the end of the story, is the future Erasmus.

Charles Kingsley (1819-75). This scholarly novelist was a clergyman who became rector of Eversley in Hampshire and later chaplain to the Queen and Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. He was the founder of 'Christian Socialism' which insisted on the social responsibility of the Church and held that moral regeneration of the working classes could be effected only by improving their living conditions. He embodied these ideas in three novels: *Yeast* (1848), *Alton Locke* (1850) and *Two Years Ago* (1857). Besides these he wrote three historical novels—*Hypatia* (1853), *Westward Ho!* (1854), *Hereward the Wake* (1866)—and a fairy tale *Water Babies* (1863). His poetic gifts are illustrated in such popular songs and ballads as "The Sands of Dee", "The Last Buccanier" etc. He was also an essayist and controversialist.

In *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* Kingsley shows his sympathy with the sufferings of the working classes—rural in one and urban in the other. An ardent reformer, campaigner and propagandist he did not bother about art which he considered unmanly. Anti-intellectual he believed in practical "muscular Christianity." He was influenced by Carlyle and like that prophet did not mince matters in his frank and courageous exposures of the exploiters. In his reforming crusade he laid particular stress on sanitation which is the theme of *Two Years Ago*. He did not approve of Chartist violence but like Mrs. Gaskell wanted brotherly understanding between the privileged and the unprivileged within the framework of the existing class hierarchy.

Hypatia gives a strikingly vivid picture of Alexandria in the 5th century when the Western Roman Empire was cracking under the attacks of Goths and Vandals. Hypatia, the beautiful daughter of a mathematician, was a neo-Platonic philosopher and expounded the liberal pagan philosophy of the Greeks. The book is an attack on the intolerance and fanaticism of Roman Catholics, who tore her to pieces.

Westward Ho! The best and most popular of Kingsley's novels celebrates the heroism of Elizabethan Protestants warring against Catholic Spain. The book was condemned as partisan by the Catholics.

Hereward the Wake relates the exploits of the outlaw Hereward who made the last brave stand against William the Conqueror in 1070.

Water Babies. This is a delightful fairy tale, told with gay humour, of a chimney-sweep who falls into a river and is turned into a water-baby. He makes acquaintance with underwater creatures and learns their tricks and also the lesson of self-sacrifice.

The gaiety and humour of this children's tale is unfortunately absent in the other novels.

Anthony Trollope (1819-82). Born in London in an impoverished

literary family, Anthony Trollope had a miserable childhood at home and a miserable boyhood at Harrow and Winchester. At 19 he got an appointment as clerk in the Post Office where he rose by steady promotion to high rank. He was engaged for twenty years in organising the postal system in the west of Ireland and did the same for two years in the south-west of England. He knew London as also the life and manners of the aristocracy and upper middle classes. Though irregularly educated, he was ambitious and picked up a fairly good knowledge of English literature. His first experiments in novel writing—he published three—based on his experience in Ireland were utter failures. But his two years in Wiltshire were more fruitful. The real Trollope appeared for the first time in *The Warden*, a 'scene from clerical life' (1855) inspired by the Salisbury Cathedral. This was the first of the 'Barsetshire' series of interlinked novels which included *Barchester Towers* (1855) his best and most popular, *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864) and *The Last Chronicles of Barset* (1867). These six novels represent the best of Trollope's fiction. In them we have a complete picture of a section of English provincial life never touched before by any writer. (George Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* was hearsay). It is a continuous story of the life of the clergy and of the upper classes who congregate in a cathedral town. His other novels, some political and some social and domestic, are less important.

Trollope was an immensely prolific writer and continued writing till his death, producing in all about fifty or sixty novels over a quarter of a century. (There being no collected edition, it is not possible to give the exact number.) The "World's Classics" lists the largest number—over 30 titles.

He was a first class plodder whose approach to literature was mechanical. He reveals in his frank and amusing *Autobiography* (1883) that he set himself the task of writing at the rate of 250 words every fifteen minutes (1,000 words an hour.) And this in addition to his official work and fox hunting twice a week! He wrote for money and accumulated some £70,000. No wonder his novels are defective artistically. Nor is their intellectual level very high. Nevertheless, they are pre-eminently readable and wholesome. Trollope was a shrewd and truthful observer of life and he had the gifts of character—drawing and story-telling. Mrs. Proudie, the Bishop's domineering wife is a classic. He writes of ordinary people in a direct, unpretentious style. This together with his tolerant, balanced and good-humoured view of life just suits the mental and emotional level of the average reader. His very ordinariness, his very pedestrianism was his asset. This is how he himself summed up one of his novels: "The story was thoroughly English. There was a little of fox-hunting and a little of tuft-hunting, some Christian virtue and some Christian cant. There was no heroism and no villainy. There was much church, but more love-making. And it was downright honest love."

Trollope enjoyed great popularity for a time, but it declined in the

70s and sank very low after his death. In the early 20th century he was forgotten. Since his revival during the second World War attempts have been made to assess him anew and to rehabilitate his later novels. Whatever be the fate of these, the *Barset* series will endure.

Barchester Towers. The cathedral town of Barchester and Barsetshire the county are both of them Trollope's inventions. The novel is a sequel to *The Warden*. It is occupied chiefly with the intrigues of the clergy for the wardenship of Hiram's Hospital, an alms house for the maintenance of twelve old beadsmen (who pray for the souls or spiritual welfare of others). There are two candidates: Mr. Harding, the former Warden who resigned because of allegations made against him for lax administration, and Mr. Quiverful, a priest with a small living and fourteen children. Harding is championed by Mr. Slope, chaplain to the new Bishop Dr Proudie and Quiverful is championed by the imperious Mrs. Proudie. Slope is a hypocritical rascal and supports the saintly Harding from the selfish motive of marrying his elder and widowed daughter Mrs. Bold, who has £1200 a year. He over reaches himself by paying court at the same time to Mrs. Bold and to the beautiful and mischievous cripple Signora Neroni, a deserted wife. In the clash between Slope and Mrs. Proudie, the latter wins and the Wardenship goes to Quiverful. Harding is, however, more than compensated by getting the deanery which has opportunely fallen vacant. Slope is completely discomfited. He is disappointed of his hope of getting the deanery, is slapped by Mrs. Bold when he proposes to her, is publicly exposed by the Signora, and is unceremoniously dismissed from chaplaincy.

William Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), the son of an eminent painter was educated in a private school and at the age of 12 went with his parents to Italy where he remained three years. He went first into a tea business and then studied law, but was gradually drawn to literature. A friend of Charles Reade and Dickens he was influenced by both—as no doubt he influenced the later Dickens (*Great Expectations* and *Edwin Drood*). It is significant that all the three kept mistresses! Collins wrote about two dozen novels, long and short, but his permanent place in English fiction rests on *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868), which are the first great novels of mystery and crime in English. Wilkie Collins may be said to be the grandfather of modern detective fiction, for he anticipated by nearly half a century the *Sherlock Holmes* stories of Conan Doyle. The mystery in Collins's novel's, however, is solved not by a detective but by one of the characters. Like Reade, Collins also wrote plays, his *Frozen Deep* having been written for Dickens's theatricals.

In construction of intricate plot Collins remains unsurpassed. This, together with his gifts of narration and a clear, vigorous and dramatic style, marks him out as an artist. In 1894, in a ballot conducted by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, he was voted as the most popular writer of the day. It is needless to talk of a Collins revival, for even in the worst phase of anti-Victorian reaction he was never forgotten.

His place in English fiction is secure.

The Woman in White. Anne Catherick, the woman in white, is confined in a lunatic asylum by Sir Francis Glyde, because she is in possession of a secret whose disclosure he is determined to prevent at all costs. Walter Hartright, tutor to Laura and her halfsister Marian Halcombe, falls in love with Laura, but though she returns his love, she is unable to marry him because she has promised her father on his death bed that she will marry Sir Francis Glyde. Hartright, heart-broken, leaves the country. Sir Francis marries Laura for her money, for his financial position is insecure. Failing to persuade her to part with her money, he enlists the help of an Italian scoundrel, the fat, smooth Count Fosco and contrives to lodge Laura in the lunatic asylum in place of Anne Catherick, who dies and is buried as Laura. Marian Halcombe by her courage and resourcefulness rescues Laura. Hartright returns and takes both of them under his care. He discovers Glyde's secret which is that he is illegitimate and has no right to the estate and title. While trying to tamper with the parish register in the vestry he is caught in a fire and is burnt to death. This paves the way for the happy union of Hartright and Laura. Count Fosco is killed by a member of the secret Italian society which he has betrayed.

The Moonstone. The moonstone, a huge diamond set in the image of the Moon-god, is seized by a British officer during the siege of Seringapatam and is taken to England. It brings ill-luck to everybody who possesses it until it is recovered by three Indian jugglers, agents of the Brahmans of Seringapatam.

George Eliot (1819-80) was the name adopted by Mary Ann Evans, daughter of a land agent in Warwickshire. She attended schools in the neighbourhood, but for the most part she educated herself by miscellaneous reading. She was brought up in the strict discipline of a Puritan household, but coming in contact with scientists and free thinkers like Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes she renounced her faith in Christianity. After her father's death she came to London and became assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*. In 1854, she went to live with Lewes as his unofficial wife. Lewes was a married man with three sons, but he was living separately from his wife, being for some technical reason unable to divorce her. Of three sons, it is said he was father only of one. Lewes, a capable miscellaneous writer, was two years younger. Douglas Jerrold, a noted humorist, described him as "the ugliest man in London." George Eliot herself was no beauty. It was a marriage of minds. Though George Eliot defended her conduct on rational grounds, she never felt quite at ease about this union. Intellectually she was among the extreme rationalists and radicals of her time but emotionally she was still a Puritan.

She travelled extensively on the continent, visiting France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. Lewes accompanied her everywhere and by his discernment and sympathy encouraged her in her ambition to write fiction. He died in 1878. After two years of loneliness, George

Eliot, ever in need of affection and support, married Walter Cross, an old friend some twenty years her junior. Her married happiness was short lived, for she died less than six months after.

Apart from her work as critic and translator, George Eliot published the following novels: *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), *Adam Bede* (1858), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1863), *Felix Holt* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

The first two novels were based on what George Eliot had heard from others. *Adam Bede* was based on an anecdote told her by a Methodist aunt from her own experience. A pretty girl in jail had confessed to her that she had murdered her illegitimate child.

The Mill on the Floss in its earlier parts is largely autobiographical. The strained relations between Maggy and Tom correspond to George Eliot's relations with her brother Isaac.

Silas Marner is a charming story of old-fashioned village life. Silas the linen weaver is a miser. His hoarded gold is stolen and he is in despair until a little orphan girl Eppie accidentally finds her way to his cottage. He adopts the girl and his affection for her restores to him happiness and contentment.

Romola is a historical romance of the Italian Renaissance. The scene is Florence at the end of the 15th century when confusion prevailed in the city after the expulsion of the Medici. George Eliot wrote the novel after a lot of painstaking research, and whatever experts may say, it is an exciting story. The character of Savonarola the Dominican monk who denounced the artistic license of the time is powerfully drawn. The other principal figures, the saintly and self-sacrificing Romola and her rascally husband Tito Melema are also memorable.

Felix Holt, the Radical. George Eliot, herself a radical, paints here an ideal picture of the radical reformer. Felix not content with preaching radical principles acts on them by working as a poor artisan. He is contrasted with the rich and conventional radical Harold Transome who, when he stands for parliament, compromises his principles by stooping to subtle bribery. The heroine Esther faced with the choice between the two chooses Felix and poverty. The story is complicated by legal questions about the ownership of the Transome estate and by other melodramatic and far-fetched incidents.

Middlemarch, A Study of Provincial Life. The scene is laid in the provincial town of Middlemarch in the first half of the 19th century. There are two parallel stories of unhappy marriage: Dorothea Brooke an idealistic and saintly puritan marries an elderly and pedantic scholar Casaubon who spends his honeymoon in research. Casaubon suspecting that Dorothea is in love with his young cousin Will Ladislaw adds a codicil to his will just before his death cutting off Dorothea from her inheritance if she marries Ladislaw. In the second story a young idealistic doctor Lydgate marries the beautiful but prosaic and materialistic Rosamund Vincy—who ruins all his

hopes of scientific discoveries.

The tragic stories are relieved by the humours of Dorothea's uncle Mr. Brooke and Mrs. Cadwallader the rector's wife.

Daniel Deronda. This is a Jewish story. Gwendolen Harleth marries the arrogant and selfish Henleigh Grandcourt for his money even when she knows that he is secretly bound to another woman. Driven to despair by his brutality she has come to depend more and more upon the noble-souled idealist Daniel Deronda. Grandcourt dies a tragic death of which she feels partly guilty. She hopes to marry Daniel, but this is not to be. Through his contact with the noble Jew Mordecai and his sister Mirah, he discovers his Jewish parentage. Gwendolen's hopes are shattered when Daniel decides to travel to the eastern countries to explore the possibilities of founding a national home for the Jews and also to marry Mirah. After a time Gwendolen becomes resigned to her fate.

George Eliot's strength lies in profound and elaborate psychological studies of character. Though the range of her characterisation is wide and various, she is particularly happy in the delineation of rural characters. Dickens delighted in characters of the London streets, Thackeray in the aristocracy, but George Eliot was specially attracted to the simple and homely people of the countryside. Her pictures of these are so designed as to bring out the humorous as well as the pathetic side of human life together with its overmastering passions and their tragic consequences. Humour, pathos and tragedy—these constitute the substance of her novels, the tragedy predominating.

These qualities are best exhibited in the first four novels where she draws upon her own observation and experience.

It is significant that most of her memorable characters occur in these earlier novels. This is so because they are the author's own relations or friends and acquaintances. Maggie Tulliver and Tom Tulliver (*The Mill on the Floss*) are George Eliot and her brother Isaac; her father Robert Evans may be discerned in a combination of Mr. Tulliver and Adam Bede; her mother in Mrs. Poyser (*Adam Bede*), her aunt Elizabeth Evans in Dinah Morris (*Adam Bede*) and Philip Wakem (*The Mill on the Floss*) is the artist friend d'Albert Durade she had met in Geneva, and who later painted her portrait. When she seeks other sources of inspiration than her personal experience—in research, learning and philosophy etc—as in the later novels she is less exciting. The later novels are lacking in spontaneity and self assurance; the author's touch is uncertain, faltering. The freshness and vigour of characterisation is replaced by argument and philosophy. The artist is swamped by the philosopher.)

Now, George Eliot was avowedly a moralist, more consciously and deliberately so than Dickens or Thackeray. She had also a high sense of author's duty to the public. She looked upon herself as a moral teacher, and in order to discharge this function effectively she kept more and more aloof from society. Though she had

renounced religious faith, she had not renounced reverence for other people's faith or for higher human values. For her lost faith she substituted moral law. In its metaphysical aspect this is the law of consequences following from our deeds. It is what the Hindus call the law of *Karma*. This law is as inexorable and immutable in the moral world as the law of gravity is in the physical world. There is no escape from the consequences of our actions. There is no question of any outside authority—God or Destiny—pronouncing judgment. Rewards and punishments follow automatically from our deeds. Our character at any moment is the sum total of our past deeds. We are what we are because of what we have done. This view is, however, repudiated by large sections of modern generation in the West influenced by Freudian psychology. According to Freud we are creatures of heredity and environment. We are what we are not because of what we have done, but because of what has been done to us. On this view the individual is absolved of all responsibility for his actions. Whatever the modern view, there is no doubt that George Eliot's belief in moral law which she taught persistently in her novels had a strong appeal for the Victorians.

In its ethical aspect the moral law is the law of Duty. Human problems can be solved only when man devotes himself to a cause higher than himself. Most human ills are due to self-absorption. The law of duty thus emerges as the supreme rule of human conduct. Dorothea Lydgate, Felix Holt, and Daniel Deronda are monumental examples of this ideal. It is wrong to say that they have been achieved at the cost of psychological realism. Ours would be a poorer world without its idealists.

It is usual to compare George Eliot, in fact all the greater of the women novelists, with Jane Austen. The comparison is irrelevant. For one thing, George Eliot's range of interests is much wider than Jane Austen's; it includes art, science, philosophy, politics, martyrdom, etc. which have hardly any place in the tiny corner of country social life to which Jane Austen limited herself. For another, George Eliot is an avowed moral instructor, something entirely alien to Jane Austen's nature and purpose. To condemn her for her role as a moral teacher in the name of art is silly. There is nothing wrong with her teaching as such except that she overdoes it. A much graver fault is her inability to do it gracefully. So long as she presents her characters dramatically, i.e. through their speeches and dialogues, she is interesting enough. But when she comes to comment upon them, to describe them, in her own person, she is laboured, pretentious, clumsy. Arnold Kettle in his *An Introduction to the English Novel* cites two examples of this clumsiness from *Middlemarch*. Having remarked upon the unpredictability of Mr. Brooke's opinions (Chapter I) she continues: "For the most glutinously indefinite minds enclose some hard grains of habit; and a man has been seen lax about all his own interests except the retention of his snuff-box, concerning which he was watchful, suspicious, and greedy of clutch." How many of us can honestly say they understand the first part of this sentence? If it is wit, we must be

too dense to appreciate it. The other example occurs in Chapter XI. Lydgate has met Rosamond casually. In the course of her reflections on the irony how an accidental meeting between two persons quite indifferent to each other may lead to their closest union, she concludes: "Destiny stands by sarcastic with our *dramatis personae* folded in her hand." George Eliot did not believe in Destiny. Is it a concession to the reader's belief or just a showing off? A worse example of crude pedantry which Mr. Kettle omits to mention is the last sentence of the next paragraph: "In fact, much the same sort of movement and mixture went on in old England as we find in older Herodotus, who also, in telling what had been, thought it well to take a woman's lot for his starting point." How many of the readers will appreciate the comparison? Examples need not be multiplied. It is a defect that grew with George Eliot and makes her later novels heavy reading.

Apart from this heaviness of style the novels of George Eliot are depressing. A cloud of gloom and tragedy hangs over her stories. May it not be that in spite of her worldly success her life in its innermost aspects was tragic? The public disapproved of her unconventional union with Lewes; it also alienated her family. It was only when she had married Cross at the age of sixty that her brother Isaac forgave her. Whether she regretted or not the step she had taken she was never at ease about it. Besides, as has been observed before, she remained a Puritan at heart. Her essential puritanism was constantly at war with her external paganism. These personal factors could not but have made her outlook on life pessimistic.

Her Present Position. In her own time, especially from 1870 to 1880, after Dickens and Thackeray had passed away and for long afterwards George Eliot was regarded as one of the greatest English novelists. The tide has now turned against her. In the Victorian period as well as in early 20th century her unconventional morality and free thinking made her fashionable reading. In the words of Saintsbury, "It was for a time almost treason to 'culture' not to admire her." But now that unconventional morality and free thinking are almost universal, her novels have lost their novelty and their appeal. In spite of the brave attempts recently made to boost her, including Dr. Leavis's *The Great Tradition*, it is unlikely that her reputation will be restored to the dizzy heights it attained in her own day and maintained at slightly lower levels until the 20s of this century. Unswayed by extravagant public acclaim, Saintsbury, long ago assigned George Eliot a high place among second class of English novelists—novelists who observe but do not create, and who have no attractive style. The judgment stands. It is only fair to add, however, that *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Silas Marner* will never want enthusiastic readers.

The Mill on the Floss. This is a moving story of sisterly affection for a brother which, thwarted by lack of understanding on the part of the brother, ends in tragedy. Mr. Tulliver, a miller on the tidal river Floss, though himself an ignorant, headstrong lout, has given

good education to his two children Tom and Maggie. Maggie's affection for Tom is frustrated by his prosaic and unimaginative temperament. The intelligent, sensitive and imaginative Maggie finds more congenial company in Philip, the hump-backed son of a neighbouring lawyer Mr. Wakem. Unfortunately, the lawyer represents Tulliver's opponents in litigation of which he is very fond, and when as a result of his losing a suit he becomes bankrupt and is sold up, he becomes a bitter enemy of the lawyer to whom he attributes his ruin. The mill is bought up by lawyer Wakem who, however, allows Tulliver to work the mill as his manager. Tulliver swallows the humiliation, but asks Tom to write in the family Bible a solemn pledge that he will avenge his father's ruin when the time comes. Maggie protests, but Tom writes and signs his name to the pledge.

In the twelve months that follow Maggie finds consolation in Thomas a Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* presented to her by Bob Jarkin, bird scarer, packman and boat owner in succession. Philip returning from abroad seeks her out and they confess their love for each other. They keep meeting in secret, but Tom discovering this, forces Maggie to bid farewell to Philip. Maggie is deeply hurt, but she yields. In the meanwhile, Tom, employed in uncle Glegg's warehouse, has made some money and pays off all debts to the great joy of his father. Eased of the burden of debt, Tulliver picks a quarrel with lawyer Wakem and flogs him mercilessly. This exercise leaves him exhausted and he dies before next morning.

Tulliver's death breaks up the household. Mrs. Tulliver, after the death of her sister Susan Dean, goes to St. Ogg to keep house for her niece Lucy and her brother-in-law. Maggie goes away to take up a teaching post.

Two years pass. Maggie goes to visit her cousin Lucy who is engaged to Philip's friend Stephen Guest. Though loyal to Lucy, Stephen is attracted by Maggie's beauty. Similarly, Maggie, though loving Philip, is attracted to Stephen. Philip is tortured by Stephen's attentions to Maggie, but when Lucy arranges a rowing trip for him and Maggie, he excuses himself and sends Stephen instead. The inevitable happens and Maggie is compromised.

Ostracized by the society of St. Ogg's and repulsed by Tom, Maggie finds shelter in the house of Bob Jarkin and his wife. Dr. Ken, a widower priest, employs her as governess to his children. After sometime, however, he also feels compelled, under pressure from his parishioners, to ask her to seek a post elsewhere. Her troubles reach a climax when she receives a letter from Stephen proposing marriage. Philip too shows fine feeling in taking all the blame upon himself. What is she to do? The crisis is resolved by a sudden flood descending upon the town. Maggie's first thought is for Tom. Getting into a boat (Bob is now a boat-owner) she rows with all her strength and reaches the mill. Safe in the boat, Tom takes the oars and realizes how wonderful his sister has been in battling against the fury of the flood. Tears well up in his eyes as he calls her by the old familiar name "Maggie!" They row on intending to rescue Lucy,

but suddenly a huge mass of wooden machinery dislodged from a wharf is seen rushing towards them. Tom leaves the oars and clasps Maggie to his arms. The next moment the drifting mass is upon them. The boat overturns and brother and sister go down locked in that last embrace—reunited at last in death.

The grim tragedy is relieved somewhat by Maggie's aunts (Mrs. Tulliver's sisters) specially the quarrelsome Mrs. Glegg. Bob Jarkin, who befriends Tom and Maggie, is also an entertaining character.

It is obvious that the novel in its earlier parts is autobiographical.

George Meredith (1828-1909) was the grandson of Melchizedek Meredith (the great 'Mel' of *Evan Harrington*), a prosperous tailor and naval outfitter of Portsmouth, and the only child of Augustus Meredith (who inherited the business) and a local innkeeper's daughter. After attending a local day school, he was sent at the age of fourteen to the Moravian School at Neuwied, on the Rhine, in Germany where he remained two years. This school founded in the 18th century by Moravians, a Protestant sect, was famous for its free and liberal principles and drew pupils from all over Europe. The cosmopolitan culture which Meredith imbibed here is reflected in his broad outlook and in his radical political views. After his return he studied law but drifted to literature. He was estranged from his father who shifted his business for some years to Cape Town. At 21, he married a widowed daughter (30) of T.L. Peacock, and had a son Arthur. The marriage was unhappy and after some nine years his wife ran away with an artist. She died, deserted and friendless two years later. He married again, this time a French girl of 24, and had a son by her, William Maxse. This marriage and another son inevitably led to estrangement between Arthur and Meredith. This breach was never healed until Arthur died at the age of 37. Meredith's second marriage proved as happy as the first had been disastrous. The second Mrs. Meredith died after twenty-one years in 1885. In 1886, Meredith moved to Flint Cottage on Box Hill in Surrey, which was his home for the rest of his life.

Meredith's early career was one of struggle and drudgery. Though he had no taste for it, he was forced to take to journalism and even accepted the tedious job of reading to an old lady to supplement his income. Even when he had become famous as a writer but not rich he served as war correspondent to the *Morning Post* in Italy in 1866 during the war of independence against Austria. At about the same time, he became literary reader to Messrs Chapman and Hall which position he held for 35 years.

Meredith's character is not very pleasing to record. The facts of his origin, parentage and upbringing noted above became known for the first time only after his death. Throughout his long life he maintained a stolid silence and allowed a host of romantic rumours about them to circulate freely. Apart from this snobbery, there was something implacable in the man which prevented him from making any attempt at reconciliation with his father, his wife and his son

from whom he was estranged. Not only was he unforgiving, he was also ungrateful to his benefactors. When the editor who had printed his early verses wrote him a letter requesting a meeting, he sent no answer. He was so proud that he disliked accepting even the smallest presents. The inference is plain. He suffered from a complex of inferiority. The tailor pursued him to the end.

Paradoxically enough, this little-minded snob rose to be the greatest living man of letters in the last two decades of his life. The explanation of the paradox lies in his uncompromising intellectual honesty. The secret which he took such pains to conceal during his life he shouted in trumpet tones in one of his earliest novels—*Evan Harrington*. The book was, as it were, a revenge on himself for his ignoble secretiveness. It is a merciless exposure of snobbery in the person of his aunt Louisa—the Countess de Saldar of the novel. All snobbery, whatever its kind, is rooted in egoism and it is egoism in all its varied manifestations that forms the theme of almost all Meredith's novels.

Similarly, though he never forgave his wife, he admitted in 'Modern Love' that both parties were to blame, for "In tragic life, God wot, No villain need be! Passions spin the plot. We are betrayed by what is false within." Dismissing the earlier extravaganzas of *The Shaving of Shagput* and *Farina* as well as the later short stories as unimportant, we may list Meredith's novels as follows: *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), *Evan Harrington* (1861), *Emilia in England* later changed to *Sandra Belloni* (1864), *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), *Vittoria* (1866), *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* (1871), *Beauchamp's Career* (1876), *The Egoist* (1879), *Tragic Comedians* (1880), *Diana of the Crossways* (1885), *One of our Conquerors* (1891), *Lord Ormont and his Aminta* (1894) and *The Amazing Marriage* (1895).

The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. Sir Austin Feverel's wife has run away with another man, and to protect his son Richard from the corrupting influence of schools he puts him through a private 'system' of his own devising. The 'system' breaks down, however, as soon as Richard reaches adolescence. In spite of all the precautions taken by Sir Austin, Richard falls in love with a neighbouring farmer's daughter, the beautiful Lucy and marries her. Sir Austin's snobish pride is hurt and he succeeds in separating Richard from his wife. Lucy becomes ill and though Sir Austin relents and recalls Richard to her side, she dies. The book is packed with wise sayings and has provided the largest number of quotations from Meredith. *Richard Feverel* is in our opinion Meredith's greatest novel.

Emilia in England or *Sandra Belloni*. Emilia Sandra Belloni, a simple Italian girl with a beautiful voice, is forced by poverty to take refuge in the rich Pole family and she and the son of the family Wilfrid fall in love with each other. Old Pole, the merchant, is ruined by speculation and plans to rehabilitate himself by grand matches for his three daughters, who are great snobs. Emilia is disillusioned by Wilfrid who despite his passion for her is attracted to Lady Charlotte Chillingworth because of her wealth and social

position. The story is continued in *Vittoria*.

Vittoria deals with the Italian Revolution of 1848, the finest scene being that in which Sandra Belloni, now a trained singer, sings her thrilling revolutionary song.

Rhoda Fleming. The theme is that of *Tess*. Dahlia Fleming, a girl of the yeoman class, is seduced and deserted. When at last the seducer repents and agrees to marry her, she, frightened by her terrible experiences, refuses to be made "an honest woman". (Meredith's views on this subject were identical with Hardy's.) Rhoda, stern and proud is subdued by her troubles and marries Robert Eccles who has been most active in rescuing Rhoda.

The Adventures of Harry Richmond is the most amusing of Meredith's novels. It is a straightforward romantic story uncomplicated by any purpose, except for the undercurrent of comic satire on snobbery. Richmond Roy is the son of a royal personage and an actress. Filled with delusions of grandeur, he sets out to satisfy his one ambition in life, namely, a great position for his son Harry Richmond. His unscrupulous manoeuvres to marry Harry to a German princess and the consequent humiliations suffered by Harry form the core of the story. Harry ultimately marries a commonplace English girl.

Beauchamp's Career. This 'philosophical political' novel deals with conflict of ideologies. Nevil Beauchamp, a gallant but slightly quixotic naval officer and a veteran of the Crimean War, is republican in his views while his rich uncle the Hon. Everard Romfrey is almost feudal in his ideas. In this clash Romfrey goes so far as to thrash Nevil's republican friend Dr. Shrapnel. Nevil insists on Romfrey's apologising to Shrapnel, which the uncle refuses to do. Distressed by this and by his unfortunate love affairs Nevil falls seriously ill and his life is despaired of. The uncle relents and apologises to Dr. Shrapnel. Nevil recovers and marries Shrapnel's ward Jenny Denham, but after a few months of happiness is drowned while trying to rescue a child from the sea.

The Egoist. This, Meredith's well planned and full-scale study of egoism, is the most characteristic and most famous, though not the most popular, of his novels. It is styled 'a comedy in narrative' and shows up the super-egoist Sir Willoughby Patterne, a rich, handsome and influential baronet. He is seen through and jilted by three ladies in succession, meeting his greatest humiliation at the hands of Clara Middleton, the highly refined daughter of a Professor. In the end, he marries Laetitia Dale whose love he had slighted in the beginning. Sir Willoughby Patterne has in him an element of universality, for he represents all of us.

The Tragic Comedians. This is a historical novel based on the tragic death in a duel of Lassalle, the German socialist, over his love affair with Helene Von Donniges, a high-born German lady.

Diana of the Crossways. This, the most brilliant and the most popular of Meredith's novels, has some historical basis in the

scandal concerning the relations between Sheridan's granddaughter Mrs. Norton and Lord Melbourne. The imputation to Mrs. Norton of betraying a political secret was, however, false.

Diana Antonia Merrion, an Irish girl of dazzling wit and beauty surprises her friends when she marries the commonplace though capable railway director Mr. Augustus Warwick. She becomes indiscreetly though innocently familiar with Lord Dannisburgh, a Cabinet Minister. Mr. Warwick brings an action for divorce, but she is exonerated. Husband and wife now begin to live apart. Diana decides to leave the country to escape gossiping tongues, but is dissuaded by her friend Emma, Lady Dunstane. She captivates Percy Dacier, a young upcoming politician, and is on the point of running away with him when the serious illness of Emma again stops her. Dacier, though disappointed, persists in his suit and Diana is again on the point of yielding when he discovers to his dismay that she has, partly under pressure of financial difficulties, revealed a state secret he had confided to her to a leading London newspaper. This betrayal puts an end to their relations. Mr. Warwick's death at this point leaves Diana free. She marries Mr. Redworth, her solid, simple and steady lover who could also be a friend—her idea of a husband.

The Crossways is the name of Diana's Irish home. The political secret betrayed by Diana was the imminent repeal of Corn Law (1846). The leading newspaper was *The Times*.

This novel and the three others that followed it—*One of Our Conquerors*, *Lord Ormont and his Aminta*, *The Amazing Marriage*—were Meredith's contribution to feminism or the cause of women's rights. They deal with the sufferings of women brought about by their subjection to male despotism or to the tyranny of social conventions. Natalia, the unmarried mother in *One of Our Conquerors*, is one of Meredith's finest women characters.

Meredith called his most characteristic novel *The Egoist* 'a comedy in narrative'. This significant phrase explains the structure of all his novels. His novels are a blend of two widely different elements: high comedy and romantic narrative, corresponding to the two sides of Meredith's make-up as a writer. On the one hand he was a romantic poet, and on the other a philosophical critic. This combination of intellectual comedy and romance makes Meredith unique in English fiction.

The easiest approach to his fiction is through his conception of comedy expounded in 1877 in his *Essay on the Idea of Comedy*: "Men's future on earth does not attract it (the Comic Spirit); their honesty and shapeliness in the present does; and whenever they wax out of proportion, overblown, affected, pretentious, bombastical, hypocritical, pedantic, fantastically delicate; whenever it sees them self-deceived or hoodwinked, given to run riot in idolatries, drifting into vanities, congregating in absurdities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly; whenever they are at variance with their professions, and violate the unwritten but preceptible laws binding

them in consideration one to another; whenever they offend sound reason, fair justice; are false in humility or mined with conceit, individually, or in the bulk—the Spirit overhead will look humanely malign and cast an oblique light on them, followed by volleys of silvery laughter. That is the Comic Spirit.”

Before proceeding further it may be remarked that Meredith is unconsciously making himself the butt of the comic spirit. Who but a ‘fantastically delicate’ pedant would pour out such a torrent of bombast to express a simple idea? The idea in simpler language is this: The Comic Spirit is not interested in man’s future state (Kingdom of Heaven, salvation etc.) but in his present health and happiness (Kingdom of Earth). Whenever one departs in speech or action from the norm dictated by commonsense, which is another name of social sense, one becomes the target of the Comic Spirit. In his ‘Ode to the Comic Spirit’, he calls it the ‘Sword of Commonsense’. Society draws this sword against such anti-social elements, and by laughing at them cures them of their folly.

Meredith accepted Darwin’s evolution theory, but believed that the process of Natural Selection stopped after Nature had endowed man with Consciousness. Consciousness brings with it consciousness of *self* or *ego*. This self-consciousness is man’s greatest boon as well as his greatest danger. For, as he is at present constituted, man is all too conscious of self and pursues his self-interest without regard to similar self-interest of others. This self-absorption, this egoism, separates him from his fellow-beings and thus becomes the great evil to which society is exposed. As society gets more and more sophisticated, egoism wears more and more elaborate disguises and manifests itself in more and more subtle forms. Meredith as representative of the Comic Spirit is out to tear off its masks and pillory it.

To say that Meredith’s novels are comedies in narrative does not mean that all of them have happy endings. *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and his last three novels have tragic endings. The reason is that a complete exposure of egoism implies also the mischief wrought by it and this in some cases is tragic. In this sense, Meredith’s novels may be said to transcend his conception of Comedy.

We have seen in an earlier chapter how in Meredith the poet philosophy comes first and how he sacrifices poetic beauty for its sake. Similarly in Meredith the novelist comedy and romance take precedence over narration. A novel, whatever else it may be, is first and foremost a story. And the success of the story depends largely on the skill with which it is told. Of course, we expect it to have wit and humour, character, dialogue etc. but these we welcome as bonus. Meredith, however, is the worst narrator imaginable. Oscar Wilde’s remark that ‘as a novelist he can do everything except tell a story’ is the plainest truth about his novels. He is so intent on scenes of romance or comedy that he neglects his narrative which links up the scenes. Sometimes he halts his narrative and out of sheer perversity launches into a lengthy digression, such for

example, as an essay on Habit, which does in no way advance the story, which in fact has nothing whatever to do with it. And as soon as he has worked up to his great final scene, he loses all interest in the story and hurriedly packs off his *dramatis personae*. No wonder he forgets some of them who may go hang. In his panoramic, sprawling and overcrowded novels Meredith is in the tradition of the great English novelists—Fielding Scott, Dickens and Thackeray—but he beats them all in looseness of construction.

Apart from being a downright bad narrator, Meredith is equally bad as a stylist. What has been said about his poetic style applies with even greater force to his prose style. His are the most difficult novels in the language. Excessive compression and ellipsis, tortured wit and strained metaphors; pedantic vocabulary and faulty syntax—all this and much more of the same kind produces a bewildering farrago of phrases and sentences in which all sense is lost. Proud as a man and proud as a writer, he disdains to say anything plainly. That would be too commonplace. He is always on show determined to be different. Reading his novels involves a strain which few readers can bear.

Besides, he makes no attempt to make his stories credible. We miss in him all those concrete and miscellaneous details—houses, streets, furniture, etc.—which produce verisimilitude or life-likeness. Except where historical events are involved as in *Diana*, *The Tragic Comedians*, *Vittoria* and *Beauchamp's Career*, his novels have an air of vagueness of unreality, there being little in them to suggest time or place.

However, when all that can be said against him has been said, it must be admitted that Meredith offers rich compensations in brilliant epigrams, penetrating psychology, sound philosophy, and above all in scenes of romance that have few equals and no superior. The meeting of Richard Feverel and Lucy is a prose idyll whose lyrical beauty has never been equalled. Other almost equally enchanting scenes are scattered in *Evan Harrington*, *Sandra Belloni* and *Vittoria*. Besides, he has added to the gallery of fictional characters such delightful snobs and impostors as Countess de Saldar and Richmond Roy, and heroines like Diana, Clara Middleton, Emilia and Natalia, who for their poetic glamour can be matched only in Shakespeare.

Meredith's style is the greatest obstacle to his appreciation. He is not everybody's cup of tea. But to those few who have the necessary cultural equipment and care for serious fiction, his novels are an intellectual feast. They are crammed with good things not to be found elsewhere in English fiction.

Apart from his intrinsic worth, Meredith is historically important as a writer who enlarged the scope of English fiction by his philosophic content. In this respect (but in no other), he leaves George Eliot miles behind. In spite of enthusiastic praises showered on him by Stevenson and others, Meredith was never popular in his time

and despite recent attempts to resurrect him it is highly unlikely that he will ever capture popular interest.

Quotations from *Richard Feverel*:

I expect that woman will be the last thing civilized by man.

Expediency is man's wisdom. Doing right is God's.

Our most diligent pupil learns not so much as an earnest teacher.

Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered.

Kissing dont last, cookery do!

Much benevolence of the passive order may be traced to a disinclination to inflict pain upon oneself.

→ **Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)** forms with Meredith a contrasted pair analogous to that of Dickens and Thackeray. Born near Dorchester (the Casterbridge of his famous novel) he was trained as an architect and practised the profession until released from it by the success of his first great novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). This success enabled him to marry, and after the death of his first wife he married again in 1914 at the age of 74. He was awarded the Order of Merit in 1910.

Hardy's works in prose fiction are: *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Trumpet Major* (1880), *A Laodicean* (1881), *Two on a Tower* (1882), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Wessex Tales* (1888), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), *Life's Little Ironies* (1894), *Jude the Obscure* (1896), and *The Well-Beloved* (1897) published previously in serial form. A few others like *A Group of Noble Dames* etc. are unimportant.

The best of Hardy's fiction is represented by five novels which are briefly noticed below.

Far from the Madding Crowd. The theme is the contrast between innocence and sophistication. Bathsheba Everdene, a woman farmer is loved by Gabriel Oak, a shepherd who has served her for years with loyal devotion. To the village comes sergeant Troy, a dashing soldier. A selfish, unscrupulous philanderer he has killed Fanny Robbin by deserting her in childbirth. By a display of his fencing skill he fascinates Bathsheba who marries him. His subsequent ill-treatment of her provokes farmer Boldwood who cherishes a consuming and uncontrollable passion for Bathsheba. He kills Troy and becomes mad. Bathsheba's eyes are opened. She now appreciates the unselfish love of Oak, a love "beside which the passion usually called by that name is as evanescent as a stream" and marries him. Theirs is, however, a chastened and subdued happiness, not that of rapturous passion.

The Return of the Native. The theme is again the impact of sophistication on peaceful pastoral life. Wildeve, formerly an engineer and now a keeper of public house, is loved by two women: Thomasin

Yeobright and Eustacia Vye. Wildeve prefers the gentle Thomasin and marries her. She on her part ignores the humble love of Diggory Ven, a reddleman. Thomasin's cousin Clym Yeobright, a diamond merchant in Paris disgusted with his trade as vain and useless decides to quit and returns home to become a schoolmaster. He falls in love with the capricious Eustacia Vye who marries him in the hope of persuading him to return to Paris where she will have a grand time. Clym's eyesight fails and he becomes a furzecutter on the Egdon Heath. This is a severe blow to Eustacia's hopes. Clym's marriage has upset Mrs. Yeobright, Clym's mother, who estranged from her son dies. To these troubles is added the mortification of discovery that Eustacia is still keeping up with Wildeve, and there is a violent scene between husband and wife. Eustacia runs away with Wildeve, but in the course of flight both are drowned. Clym, thinking himself partly responsible for the death of his mother and of his wife, becomes an itinerant preacher. The widowed Thomasin marries Ven.

The Mayor of Casterbridge. This novel, Hardy's tragic masterpiece, is concerned to show that man can be master of his fate to a limited extent, but in the end nothing that he can do will avail against the malignancy of higher powers. Michael Henchard, a hay trusser, gets drunk in a fair and sells his wife and child for five guineas to Newson, a sailor. Returning to his senses he takes a solemn vow not to touch drink for twenty years. By his industry, courage, and determination he rises to be Mayor of Casterbridge (Dorchester). After eighteen years his wife returns believing Newson dead and is reunited to Henchard. He is led to believe that her daughter Elizabeth Jane is his own child, when in fact she is Newson's. At this point his original headstrong nature asserts itself. He quarrels with his able assistant in the corn trade, Donald Farfrae, who has brought from Scotland a new recipe for restoring bad grain. This spells the doom of his business. Farfrae becomes his successful rival in business as well as in love, for he marries Lucetta the woman Henchard loves. His wife dies and he learns that Elizabeth Jane is not his child. The scandal of the sale of his wife is revealed and he takes to drink again. Newson returns and takes away Elizabeth Jane, Henchard's sole comfort. Abandoned to his fate he dies, lonely and wretched in a hut on Egdon Heath. His will directing that he should not be buried in consecrated ground, that nobody should remember him, etc. makes pathetic reading.

Henchard is a true tragic character. To say as some do, however, that his is a tragedy of character, that he illustrates the doctrine that Character is Destiny, is not a complete statement of facts. Though he cannot escape responsibility for his downfall, his punishment is out of all proportion to his misdeeds. Henchard's is not a simple story of crime and punishment. He is trapped by circumstances beyond his control. The logic of Hardy's philosophy makes Chance or blind Universal Will the villain.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, A Pure Woman. Tess is the daughter of

John Durbeyfield, a poor carrier in the valley of Blackmoor. A person addressing him as 'Sir John' tells him he is the descendant of the ancient family of D'Urbervilles. His wife Joan Durbeyfield sends Tess to a neighbouring family bearing, with doubtful right, that name to claim kinship and support. She is employed there and is seduced by the young Alec D'Urberville. She returns home and has a baby who dies. Thereafter while working as a dairymaid on a farm she is courted by and becomes engaged to Angel Clare, son of a clergyman. Before the wedding day she writes him a letter confessing the affair with Alec, and slips it under his door. The letter is later found unread under the carpet of the room. On the wedding night Alec confesses that some time before he had indulged in forty-eight hours' dissipation with a stranger. When Tess makes her confession he is aghast and leaves her. He goes away to Brazil. Chance throws Tess again in Alec's way. His longing for her being revived he offers marriage and threatens her. In her wretchedness she writes Clare a letter imploring him to come and save her. Just then misfortunes come upon her family and she is forced to accept Alec's protection. Angel Clare returns and seeks her out. Alec had been assuring her that Clare won't take her back. Maddened at being deceived a second time she murders Alec, is arrested, tried, and hanged. " 'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess."

Tess has been called by some Hardy's tragic masterpiece. It is difficult to assent to this view. It is a profoundly moving story but it is not a great tragedy. The gratuitous comment about 'the President of the Immortals' whether it actually reflects Hardy's view of the government of the universe or not, is deplorable. It robs the tragedy of all its grace and power. The blasphemy is an outrage on the reader's feelings, and such is not the effect of a true tragedy.

Jude the Obscure in the author's words tells "of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit" and of "the tragedy of unfulfilled aims." Broadly speaking, it repeats the theme of *Tess*, dealing as it does with the social question of marriage.

Jude, a village boy fired by academic aspirations, educates himself in the classics while working as a stone mason, but fails to get admitted to a university. The tragedy of his unfulfilled ambition is caused by his own sensual temper. He is trapped into marriage with Arabella Donn, a girl as sensual as himself. She bears him a boy and goes off to Australia. Then he falls in love with his cousin Sue Bridehead, a free thinking and lively intellectual of Oxford. She marries a middle-aged schoolmaster Phillotson. Physical revulsion soon drives her to Jude and they live together several years and beget children. They are free to marry, for both are divorced from their respective spouses, but Sue is reluctant to take this step. Arabella comes back and Sue takes charge of her boy, little Father Time. He seems very old for a boy and must be the youngest philosopher in the world; he takes no interest in flowers, for he says he knows that they will soon wither away. He hangs his stepbrother

and stepsister as well as himself, leaving behind the famous explanation: "Done because we are too menny." The hitherto emancipated Sue gets an attack of religion, is stricken with remorse and rejoins her middle-aged Phillotson. Arabella claims her Jude.

The story is crude, patently contrived and unconvincing. Hardy had exhausted his vein of fiction, for after this he wrote no more novels.

One of the great novelists of the Victorian era, Hardy unlike Meredith has been popular alike with critics and public. Meredith optimistic by temperament contemplated life in the spirit of comedy and threw the searchlight of his satiric criticism on egoisms of high society. Hardy pessimistic by temperament responded to the tragedies of life which he studied in the peasantry of Dorsetshire and the surrounding countryside which he called Wessex. Like Wordsworth he believed that essential human nature is better studied in unsophisticated rustic life than in the artificial life of towns. In his novels, sophistication has a disturbing effect on the peaceful pastoral scenes. In Meredith's novels there is hardly any sense of time or place; in Hardy the sense of time and place is very strong. His attachment to his native Wessex is reflected not only in vivid pictures of the sons of the soil, but in minutely observed details of Nature—landscape, trees, heaths, winds and seasons. He is particularly impressed by the past, by the continuity of life from ancient times attested by such relics as Stonehenge, Roman roads, etc. as also by the traditions, beliefs and superstitions which still influence the lives of the inhabitants. The time of most of his novels is the period of Napoleonic wars. The most important local spot in the novels is Egdon Heath. It is almost a character. *In the Return of the Native* it occupies a whole chapter to the entire exclusion of humanity. Scenic descriptions in Hardy are so refreshing, but this is rather overdoing a good thing. Egdon Heath is symbolic of Nature affecting, for good or evil, the lives of those who live in its neighbourhood.

In style, Meredith is too brilliant and too difficult for the ordinary reader, and his realism is glamorised with fantasy and romance. Hardy's style, on the other hand, is comparatively plain and direct aimed at unromantic, unsentimental portrayal of country life. It is undistinguished, untutored, laboured, even stilted, cluttered at times with technical words.

The main interest of Hardy's fiction is love—plain earthy passion. His women are fascinating creatures of elemental Nature, passionate, impulsive and rather passive. How easily does Henchard's wife submit to the sale!

The humour of Hardy's rustics has been much commented upon. It is so literary and cultured that it is difficult to believe that the speakers are rustics. They are quite obviously author's mouth-pieces. Hardy's objectivity is a myth: This is not to question the sincerity of his vision. He is presenting truth as he sees it, but he

sees it through the coloured spectacles of his philosophy. Perfect objectivity is of course impossible, but obsessive philosophy such as Hardy's has its dangers of subjectivism and personal prejudice. His stories are inventively done, but the plots are all manipulated to one end—that of proving his fatalistic doctrine. Chance and Coincidence are altogether too obligingly handy to be credible. His philosophy is usually dismissed as gloomy. In fact, it is not only gloomy but preposterous, even perverse. One may pertinently ask, as Marcus Aurelius would certainly have asked: What possible cause could have determined the President of the Immortals to destroy Tess? What possible advantage could He think would accrue to him from such wanton injustice? Hardy is determined to be miserable. Heavily drawn on Schopenhauer, this philosophy is a general condemnation of life. The best thing is not to be born; the next best to commit suicide! The happy endings in some of his novels are mere concessions to his readers. When he launched an attack on the social convention of marriage in *Tess* and *Jude*, he withdrew these concessions which are not in accord with his basic pessimism. The saving grace of *Tess* is that the theme of seduction is treated with great delicacy. What provoked the public, however, was not this theme which had been treated before by other writers (George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth*, Meredith's *Rhoda Fleming*), but making Tess, the seduced girl, a heroine, 'a pure woman'. The Victorians were not prepared to swallow this. They could pity an unmarried mother but they could not forgive her. Chagrined by the reception given to the book Hardy gave the public a stiffer dose of the same kind of stuff in *Jude* with the result that he had to close his fiction shop and open that of poetry.

Like all so-called realists of today, Hardy made the mistake of presenting only one side of the coin. He ignored the joy, the beauty and the wonder of life, which are as real as its miseries and ironies.

Despite these criticisms, however, it is only fair to admit that Hardy remains one of the greatest figures in Victorian prose fiction. His special strength lies on the side of construction. His architectural training is reflected in the careful planning, organisation and symmetry of his plots. In this again, he is a complete contrast to Meredith. By appropriating a particular region of rural England, he succeeded in capturing the essential characteristics of its life during the Napoleonic wars forever.

George Gissing (1857-1903). In passing from Hardy to Gissing we move from one gloomy depth to another which, if anything, is only gloomier. His pessimism was not founded on any cosmic philosophy like Hardy's; it was forced on him by experience. This experience, which consisted of extreme wretchedness and privation and loneliness, he owed for the most part to his own foolish actions. He was born at Wakefield in Yorkshire where his father kept a small chemist's shop. A brilliant student at Owen's College, Manchester, he fell in love with a prostitute. To finance her rather insatiable thirst for gin he robbed the College common room, was

caught and sent to jail. Later, his friends providing the passage he fled to America where he experienced great poverty and misery which is reflected in his famous autobiographical novel *New Grub Street*. After returning from America he settled in London where he lived by tutoring. Getting a small legacy from the chemist's shop he published his first novel *Workers in the Dawn* in 1880 at his own expense. The book was a failure. Then he married the Manchester prostitute. The marriage was a disaster. His wife became insane and ultimately died in 1888. In 1889, he made a trip to Italy. In 1890, he thoughtlessly married a woman he had casually met in the street. This marriage proved even more disastrous than the first, for the woman brought two children, boys, who were not only a nuisance but increased the financial burden of the household. After several miserable years, Gissing was released from this bondage by separation. Being free he now acquired some important friends, H.G. Wells among them. He found relief from loneliness in the congenial company of a French woman with whom he settled in France. He made a second trip to Italy in 1897, described in *By the Ionian Sea* (1901). In these later years he was better off than before. *New Grub Street* had brought him into prominence and some of his shorter novels also had a good sale. He was working on a historical novel of 6th century Italy, *Veranilda*, when he died prematurely at his home in France.

Gissing's novels are: *Workers in the Dawn* (1880), *Unclassed* (1884), *Isabella Clarendon*, *A Life's Morning*, *Demos*, *Thyrza*—all between 1885 and 1887—*The Netherworld* (1889), *The Emancipated* (1890), *New Grub Street* (1891), *Born in Exile* (1892), *Odd Women* (1893), *In the Year of Jubilee* (1894), *The Whirlpool* (1897), *The Town Traveller* (1898), *The Crown of Life* (1899), *Our Friend the Charlatan* (1901), *Will Warburton* and two collections of short stories published posthumously. His non-fiction works are: *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898), *By the Ionian Sea* (1901), *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903).

Gissing's life was dominated by an overwhelming sense of failure. He seems to have derived a sort of masochistic satisfaction from his defeats and failures. Failure, futility, hopelessness—these are the haunting themes of his novels. He believed that the realistic novel of everyday life of upper or middle classes had become a humdrum affair and it was time the serious novelist looked below the surface and painted the hideous picture of the lower classes living in urban slums. Barring *Isabella Clarendon* and *A Life's Morning* which are psychological studies dealing with moral problems, all his earlier novels, namely those written before his Italian visit of 1889, deal with slums. In his first two novels his attitude to the poor was sympathetic and he was concerned to ameliorate their conditions. Then his attitude to the poor hardened and *Demos*, and *The Netherworld* are savage attacks on working-class and socialistic reformers. According to him the slum-dwellers had been sunk so long in the depths of poverty, squalor and degradation that there was no hope of their reclamation by any piece-meal reforms. A

clean sweep of the whole social order and a new start was the only remedy.

Gissing's trip to Italy in 1889 had widened his horizon and led to a series of novels of middle class urban life. They, however, show no change in his gloomy outlook. They are as bleak and hopeless as the earlier ones. Artistically, the later novels are an improvement in that the emphasis is shifted from incident and plot contrivance to character. The best of this group is represented by *New Grub Street* and *Born in Exile*.

New Grub Street describes the wretchedness and poverty of authors in London and their jealousies and intrigues in the struggle for recognition. The main theme is the contrast between the go-getting opportunist reviewers and the conscientious artists. The first is represented by Jasper Milvain who by self-advertisement and chicanery succeeds all along the line; to the second belong Edwin Reardon and Harold Buffin who because they would not compromise their artistic conscience are doomed to poverty, futility and failure. Reardon dies a premature death because of poverty aggravated by desertion of his worldly-minded and unsympathetic wife. Buffin is an idealisation of the artist. He lives in a garret, ekes out bare subsistence by tutoring a few pupils and is the author of an absolutely realistic novel "in the sphere of the ignobly decent." He commits suicide.

Born in Exile deals with the Meredithian theme of snobbery. Godwin Peak, of humble birth but possessing exceptional ability, aspires to a higher social status. He notices that the class-barrier does not operate against priests, who can marry above them. Though he is an atheist he hides the fact from his friends and becomes a candidate for Orders. In this character he is admitted to a rich and cultured family, falls in love with one of the daughters and is almost accepted. At this point he has a revulsion of feeling against himself for playing such a detestable part. Ultimately he is exposed. In this novel, as in *Our Friend the Charlatan* and other later novels, Gissing attacked the conventional standards of Victorian society.

Incidentally, *Born in Exile* is also the most revealing of Gissing's novels. Like his friend H.G. Wells, Gissing smarted under a sense of inferiority. Much of his misery was due to his frustrated snobbery, to the agonising sense that he was prevented by poverty from associating with his equals. It was his fear of cultivated women that made him marry women of the lower classes who could not provide the intellectual companionship he longed for. But cultivated women haunted his imagination and are the theme of *The Emancipated*, *The Odd Women*, *In the Year of Jubilee*, and *The Whirlpool*. The role of women in society was a theme of growing importance in the 80s and 90s, and Gissing shows a remarkable insight into female psychology.

Gissing is a realistic writer, but his realism is different from Hardy's. According to him, objectivity is impossible and truth for

the artist is not absolute truth—whatever that may be—but the impression of truth produced on him. To convey that impression with absolute sincerity is the sole business of the artist. Having experienced poverty and privation himself, he was irresistibly drawn to painting the darker side of London life; and the truth of his pictures has never been questioned. He is content to condemn the social order responsible for poverty and its demoralising influence without advancing any explicit theory of reform.

Though Gissing, like Dickens, placed the scene of his novels in London and pictured the life of the poor, he had neither the creative energy nor the buoyant humour of the master. His great admiration for Dickens would seem to be a case of attraction of the opposites. Though many appreciative critical studies of Dickens have appeared during the last hundred years, Gissing's monograph on him is still the soundest and is not likely to be superseded.

The most pleasing of all Gissing's books is the autobiographical *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. It is the journal of a retired man freed from the drudgery of authorship recording his reminiscences, reveries and mature reflections on a variety of subjects of general interest. Gissing pronounced the book as "more an aspiration than a memory." That he was well equipped as a scholar is nowhere better shown than in its soothing meditative pages.

Gissing's style is plain, direct and yet not undistinguished.

Historically he is a transitional writer. In form and technique, he is Victorian; in substance twentieth century. The final impression is that of a man whose weak character involved him in avoidable hardships, and whose imperfect understanding of human potentialities narrowed his creative vision. In spite of his seriousness and sincerity he remains a writer of the second rank though his place in that rank is high.

✓ **Samuel Butler** (1835-1902), the boldest rebel against Victorian values, was the son of a clergyman and was intended for the church. He was educated at Shrewsbury School and St. John's College, Cambridge, where he won honours in classics. Refusing to take orders he went in 1859 to New Zealand where he successfully ran a sheep farm. Returning in 1864, he studied painting and had his paintings exhibited. Rather late he discovered that his real 'line' was literature and to it he devoted the rest of his life. Of his works those of literary interest are *Erewhon* (1872), *Erewhon Revisited* (1901) both satires; *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), a semi-autobiographical novel; *The Fair Heaven* (1874) an ironical defence of the miraculous in Christianity (Resurrection of Christ, etc.); *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* (1881), a travel book resulting from his visits to Italy; *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897), ascribing the poem to a woman of Sicily; translations in colloquial prose of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (1898, 1900); *Life of Dr. Samuel Butler*, (1896), his grandfather, the famous headmaster of Shrewsbury School and Bishop of Lishfield; *Shakespeare's Sonnets, reconsidered*

and in part re-arranged (1899), contending that "Mr. W.H." was an ignoble commoner; *The Notebooks of Samuel Butler* (1912), a selection from various manuscripts.

His scientific writings are: *Life and Habit* (1877), *Evolution Old and New* (1879), *Unconscious Memory* (1880), *Luck or Cunning* (1887), *The Deadlock in Darwinism* (1890). Butler accepted Evolution but rejected Natural Selection on the ground that it was 'mechanistic', that it banished mind from the universe. This is the theme of *Life and Habit*, his major contribution to the controversy. In *Unconscious Memory*, he anticipated some of the conclusions of modern psychology. Butler, of course, was no scientist, but he grumbled because his claim to being one was not recognised.

Butler's reputation as a satirist rests on *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*.

Erewhon (anagram of Nowhere) is a satirical romance describing an Utopia which is placed in a remote part of New Zealand. It is a satire on European civilization. The most remarkable feature of this land is the reversal of the roles of disease and crime. Disease is considered immoral and persons suffering from physical ailments like consumption are jailed as criminals. Crime, on the other hand, is regarded as a disease and criminals are accordingly treated as patients in hospital. Its religion is a banking system (Musical Banks) and its education consists of a set of formulas (Birth Formulae) banishing all independent thought. Machines have been developed but the fear that they might evolve and master their makers leads to their banishment. In the end the narrator escapes along with his sweetheart in a balloon made by himself.

Erewhon Revisited. Higgs, the narrator, visits Erewhon after twenty years and is astonished to discover that his escape in a balloon has been taken as a great miracle, that a religion has grown up around it, that he himself is worshipped as the child of the sun, and a great temple is on the point of being dedicated to him. Professors Hanky and Panky have cleverly exploited the credulity of the people and the Musical Banks have adopted the new religion of 'Sunchildism'. Horrified at the mischief he has done and driven to desperation by the preposterous sermon preached by Hanky at the dedication, Higgs reveals himself, but is gently led away. A conference follows to decide the future course of action about the new religion. Eventually Higgs is taken out of the country.

The Way of All Flesh. In this famous novel, which is basically but not wholly autobiographical, Butler directs his satire principally at the tyranny of parental authority and incidentally at clerical discipline. The tyranny exercised by father on son is traced through several generations of the Pontifex family. George Pontifex, the domineering publisher, bullies his son Theobald into taking orders and tricks him into marrying the complacent Christina. Theobald in turn puts his tyrannical yoke upon his son Ernest who after his miserable childhood and school days is forced to take orders. The

repression has disastrous consequences. Ernest deliberately molests a young woman taking her for a prostitute, and is sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Released from jail he contracts illicit relations with Ellen, formerly a maidservant of his family, and is only released from her and her drunkenness by the discovery that she is already married. A timely legacy from an aunt enables him to devote himself entirely to literature. The gloomy satire is relieved by the pleasant portrait of Althea Pontifex (drawn from Butler's friend Miss Savage) and by the humour of the "godless old sinner", Mrs. Jupp, the landlady.

Butler antagonised the literary and scientific world by his wayward and acrimonious writings and he was not noticed in his time. With the publication of *The Way of All Flesh* after his death the tide turned and he was acclaimed as one of the greatest writers of the 19th century. To scoff at one's parents in public has never been held an edifying or pleasant exercise and the book has never appealed to maturer and saner minds. But it was hailed as a Bible by the rebellious generation that came after him. It has exercised considerable influence on the literature of the 20th century. Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* smacks of Butler and Bernard Shaw has generously acknowledged his debt to him. Butler was a genius of sorts, and his originality, like Meredith's, was that of a man who wants to be different from everyone else. That was why he disparaged Dickens. As a satirist he recalls Swift in his mastery both of irony and of plain, unadorned, forceful prose. He was a gifted but not a great creative writer.

Extracts from *The Way of All Flesh*—

All animals except man know that the principal business of life is to enjoy it, and they do enjoy it as much as man and other circumstances will allow.

The clergyman is expected to be a human Sunday. Things must not be done in him which are venial in the week-day classes. He is paid for this business of leading a stricter life than other people. It is his 'raison d'être'. If his parishioners feel that he does this, they approve of him, for they look upon him as their own contribution towards what they deem a holy life. This is why a clergyman is so often called a Vicar—he being the person whose vicarious goodness is to stand for that of those entrusted to his charge.

There are two classes of people in this world—those who sin, and those who are sinned against; if a man must belong to either, he had better belong to the first than to the second.

It never occurred to him that the presumption was in favour of the rightness of what was most pleasant and that the onus of proving that it was not right lay with those who disputed its being so.

The limits of vice and virtue are wretchedly ill-defined. Half the vices which the world condemns most loudly have seeds of goodness in them and require moderate use rather than total abstinence.

He said: Oh don't talk about rewards, Look at Milton, who got only £5 for *Paradise Lost*. 'And a great deal too much', I rejoined promptly. I would have given him twice as much myself not to have written at all.

I know no exception to the rule that it is cheaper to buy milk than to keep a cow.

R. L. Stevenson (1850-94). Robert Louis Stevenson is a refreshing contrast to pessimists and grumblers like Hardy and Gissing. Optimistic in temperament and Bohemian in life, he left social problems and morbid psychological studies studiously alone and engaged himself in the more congenial work of writing tales of romantic adventure for the young. He was born in Edinburgh and came of a family of famous lighthouse engineers. Serious illness in childhood made him a permanent invalid and throughout his life he roamed the world in search of health. He was educated at Edinburgh university where at first he studied Engineering, then finding it too strenuous transferred to Law. He was called to the Bar, but didn't practise. Accompanied by a friend he journeyed through France and Belgium in a canoe, recording his experience in *An Inland Voyage* (1878). Another journey in southern France is recorded in *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes* (1879). Hearing that his friend Mrs. Osborne, whom he had met in the artists' colony Barbizon (in France), was ill in California he hurried there, at great risk to his health, in an emigrant ship. His experiences of this trip are embodied in *Across the Plains* (1893). He married Mrs. Osborne and returned home (1880). Seeking warmer climate he settled near Marseilles (1882) and published *Treasure Island* (1883) which first brought him to public notice. This was followed by the success of *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). From 1884 to 1887, he lived at the seaside resort of Bournemouth (on the southern coast of England). In 1887, ill health sent him to Adirondacks mountains (N.Y., U.S.A.) and he never returned home. For two years he cruised in South Pacific, and then settled at Samoa on the 'Vailima' property he bought there. He took keen interest in the local politics of the Samoans who lovingly called him Tusitala, 'teller of tales'. He died suddenly of cerebral haemorrhage and was buried in Samoa.

Stevenson was novelist, essayist and poet. His delightful poems for children have already been noticed.

As a writer of fiction he delighted in tales of romantic adventure, the best of which are those that deal with his native Scotland in the 18th century; *Kidnapped* (1886), *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889), *Catriona* (1893), and the unfinished masterpiece *Weir of Hermiston*. His *Treasure Island* (1883) is a classic of adventure for the young.

In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Stevenson travelled beyond his sphere and produced a story symbolising the dual nature of man—a mixture of good and evil.

Stevenson's short stories, among the finest in the language, are contained in several collections, the best being *New Arabian Nights* (including 'Pavilion on the Links', 1883) and *Merry Men* (including 'Markheim' and 'Thrawn Janet', 1887).

His other and lesser romances and short tales are: *Prince Otto* (1885) exceptional for studies of women, for absence of female interest is a noteworthy feature of Stevenson's romances; *The Black*

Arrow (1888), a romance placed in England during the Wars of the Roses; *St. Ives* completed by 'Q' (1897), the story of a French prisoner of war during Napoleonic wars; *The Island Nights' Entertainments* (1893), collection of stories of Polynesian islands. To these less successful works may be added *The Wrecker* (1892) and *The Ebb-tide* (1894) produced in collaboration with his stepson Lloyd Osborne.

Stevenson's essay books are: *Inland Voyage* (1878), *Travels with a Donkey* (1879), *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), *Silverado Squatters* (travel account of Far West America, 1883), *Memories and Portraits* (1887), and *Across the Plains* (1893). The best of all is *Virginibus Puerisque* (for youths and maidens) followed closely by *Travels with a Donkey*. All his travel books are essentially in the nature of essays.

Both in his essays and in his romances Stevenson shows himself a delicate and finished artist. He found the length of a novel 'killing', and rightly kept the scope of his romances within manageable limits. When he tried a larger canvas as in *The Wrecker*, he was less successful. His small-scale romances are carefully planned and tightly constructed. He was a born storyteller and master of a fluent and vigorous narrative style. Absence of female interest in his fiction has already been remarked; what is even more remarkable is that though a Bohemian in his ways he never departs from the traditional Puritanism of his race. His realism is 'clean'; it has no taint of that coarseness which mars the work, for example, of Moore and other followers of the French school of Zola. David's love-affair with Catriona is handled with a delicacy and beauty rare in fiction. A healthy, wholesome morality informs all his work.

As an essayist Stevenson is in the line of Lamb and Hazlitt. He was an ardent admirer of Hazlitt (see his essay 'Walking Tours'), but is more loveable than his model. An essay may be "a loose sally of the mind" (Dr Johnson), but it is not on that account a loose work of art. Stevenson's essays are highly wrought pieces of art. His style has come in for a good deal of disparaging criticism. His enthusiastic admiration for Meredith and his confession that he had played "the sedulous ape" to many authors have prejudiced some unreflecting critics against him. They condemn his style as artificial. Stevenson admired Meredith for his insight into civilized man's subtle egoisms, but this admiration did not imply approval or imitation of his difficult and fantastic style. Stevenson's is certainly a studied and highly cultivated style, and yet it is clear, picturesque, fluent, and forceful. He is artificial in the sense in which all conscious stylists are artificial. And in any case his extraordinary popularity belies the charge.

Stevenson's essays, like his romances, embody the joyous spirit of youth. In a sense he never outgrew his boyhood. This, however, does not mean that he was irresponsible. For all his air of Bohemianism and unconventionality, he was at heart a moralist, a lay preacher of sermons. His message or philosophy is summed up in

three words: Courage, Cheerfulness and Charity. Behind the seemingly irresponsible boyishness of his 'Apology for Idlers' there is a core of truth and sound commonsense. His frank, innocent epicureanism, his whimsicality, his playfulness—all these are factors in the charm of his personality so cunningly transferred to his essays.

Considering his life-long struggle against ill-health, Stevenson's output and its artistic excellence are amazing. *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped* and their characters—David Balfour, Jim Hawkins and Long John Silver—are classics of romance; while Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are permanent acquisitions to the literature of allegory. 'Will O' the Mill', 'Markheim', 'Thrawn Janet', 'Pavilion on the Links' and 'Providence and the Guitar' are models of the short story unapproached in the language. Altogether, his romances, short stories and essays constitute a body of work which has the unique distinction of universal popularity. His appeal, especially to the young in heart, is perennial. Some critics consider him 'slight' or 'thin' beside the more serious writers. It may, however, be safely predicted that he will continue to be read long after some of the serious masters of fiction are forgotten. It is no small tribute to the genius and personality of Stevenson that, after Dickens, he is the best-loved author of the Victorian era.

Treasure Island. The story placed on the west coast of England in the 18th century is related by a boy Jim Hawkins whose mother keeps the inn 'Admiral Benbow'. An old buccaneer lodging at the inn has in his chest a map of the place where Capt. Flint's treasure is buried. His former associates determined to seize the map raid the inn. Jim Hawkins frustrates their design, secures the map and hands it over to Squire Trelawny. The Squire and his friend Dr. Livesey set sail for Treasure Island in the schooner 'Hispaniola' taking Jim with them. Some of the crew are the Squire's faithful servants and dependants, but the majority are all buccaneers recruited by a one-legged rascal Long John Silver. Their plot to seize the ship and kill the Squire and his men is discovered by Jim, and after many thrilling skirmishes and adventures, is completely defeated. The Squire with the help of marooned pirate Ben Gunn succeeds in securing the treasure.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Dr. Jekyll discovers a drug by which he can separate his evil nature, embodying it in a transformation of himself as Mr. Hyde. In this character he unrestrainedly indulges his evil impulses and even commits a gruesome murder. In course of time the evil in him becomes dominant and he is involuntarily transformed into Hyde. The drug has lost its power of restoring his original form and character. He is horrified at the discovery, is arrested, and commits suicide.

Kidnapped. The story belongs to the period subsequent to the rebellion of 1745 and is based on the historical incident of the murder of Colin Campbell, the King's Factor (agent) on the forfeited estate of Ardshiel. Young David Balfour finding himself poor

on the death of his father goes to seek assistance from his uncle Ebenezer who holds the entire family property of Shaws by virtue of an agreement between him and his brother Alexander (David's father). (Both brothers had loved the same lady and the dispute was settled by one man taking the lady and the other the property.) The rascally old uncle first tries to get him killed, but failing in the attempt, has him kidnapped on a ship bound for America there to be sold as a slave on the plantations. On the voyage Alan Breack, one of the rebels of 'Fortyfive' is rescued from a sinking ship. Shipwrecked on the coast of the island of Mull David and Alan set off for their homes. They witness the murder of Colin Campbell and are suspected as accomplices. They hurry off and after a hazardous journey across the Highlands escape across the firth of Forth. Back home David exposes the knavery of his uncle who is forced to agree to pay him two-thirds of the yearly income of Shaws.

Catriona, the sequel to *Kidnapped*, continues the story of David. Because of his friend the outlaw Alan he gets involved in Highland politics, and at great risk to his own life, tries to secure the acquittal of Alan's cousin James Stewart of the Glens who has been falsely accused of the murder of Colin Campbell. He fails and James is hanged.

While in Edinburgh he falls in love with Catriona, a brave Highland girl who helps her father James More, a rebel, to escape from prison by taking his place there. Public sympathy induces the Lord Advocate to release her and Miss Grant, his eldest daughter, furthers the love affair. Alan escapes to France and David goes to Holland to study Law at Leyden. Catriona who travels by the same ship to join her father in Europe is separated from her friends and is sheltered by David. Both being young it is a most delicate situation for David. They live together as brother and sister until the girl's father arrives. He is a mean beggarly rascal who tries to sell Alan to the English. He is, however, thwarted, and David marries Catriona in Paris and returns home. Since his uncle is now dead he comes into full possession of his property.

Selections from *Virginibus Puerisque*.

To marry is to domesticate the Recording Angel. Once you are married, there is nothing left for you, not even suicide, but to be good.

There is some meaning in the old theory about wild oats; and a man who has not had his green-sickness and got done with it for good, is as little to be depended on as an unvaccinated infant.

For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt.

Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality.

There is no duty we so much under-rate as the duty of being happy. By being happy we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor.

A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five pound note.

To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive.

Science writes of the world as if with the cold finger of a starfish; it is all true; but what is it when compared to the reality of which it discourses?

If your religion makes you sad, depend upon it, it is wrong.

A mortified appetite is not a wise companion.

Next to a good book, tobacco, and the woman of your heart, a river is the best thing in the world.

Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept; but thanks to hunger and the work-house, one not easily to be abused; and within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality.

That eminent chemist who took his walks abroad in tin shoes, and subsisted wholly upon tepid milk, had all his work cut out for him in considerable dealings with his own digestion.

It is better to lose health like a spendthrift than to hoard it like a miser.

CHAPTER 41

THE VICTORIAN NOVEL (2)

Lytton—Disraeli—Blackmore—Borrow—'Lewis Carroll'—Others.

MINOR NOVELISTS

Bulwar Lytton, later Lord Lytton (1803-73), and Benjamin Disraeli later Lord Beaconsfield (1804-81), may conveniently be considered together. Both were brilliant dandies in love with fashionable life, romance, love and luxury. In this as in temper they had something of Byron. As politicians both were conservative, the one rising to Colonial Secretary, the other to Chancellor of the Exchequer and then to Prime Minister. As writers both were gifted with high talent which in Bulwar amounted almost, but not quite, to genius. Here the comparison ends; for Bulwar was rather artificial and insincere in his writings, while Disraeli for all his extravagant dandyism was the very soul of sincerity. His writings, even the most fantastic of his early romances, are informed by serious purpose—a purpose which he consistently strove to accomplish in his practical life as a politician and statesman.

Lytton was a writer of amazing fecundity and versatility. Besides verse, plays, pamphlets, etc. he wrote a very large number of novels of many kinds which over nearly half a century reflected all the changes the period witnessed in taste, fashion and thought. His first novel *Pelham* (1828), picturing a dandy and fashionable life, may have owed something to Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1826). Its effect may be judged from the fact that it provoked Carlyle's satire in *Sartor Resartus*. In *Paul Clifford* (1830) the hero is a highwayman, and in *Eugene Aram* (1823) a murderer. The most important of Bulwar's novels, however, are the historical: *The Last days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835), *The Last of the Barons* (1834), and *Harold* (1843). These were followed by the domestic trilogy of *The Caxtons* (1850), *My Novel* (1853) and *What will He do with it?* (1859). Then came his wonder tales in *A Strange Story* and *The Haunted and Haunters* (1859), a most powerful story of the supernatural (Bulwar believed in astrology, magic and the occult).

As a verse-writer Bulwar is remembered for his *New Timon*, a sneering attack on Tennyson which provoked the latter's ferocious retort in *Punch*. His plays *The Lady of Lyons* (1838), *Richelieu* (1838) and *Money* (1840) held the London stage for nearly half a century.

Lytton's wide though not profound knowledge, lively wit and fancy, fluent narrative and ornate style combined to make him immensely popular in his day and for a long time afterwards. He is not very popular today, but despite his denigration by the critics influenced mostly by Thackeray, his historical novels are destined for a permanent place in English romantic fiction.

The Last Days of Pompeii. This is a love story of two young Greeks placed at Pompeii just before its destruction by the eruption of Visuvius in 79 A.D. The book gives interesting glimpses of Roman life at the time.

Rienzi. This traces the career of the historical Rienzi, a great tribune of the people, who established a Republic in Rome in the 14th century. He was excommunicated, returned from exile, and was assassinated. There are also interesting side lights on life and manners of the time.

The Last of the Barons. This is about Warwick the 'King-maker' and relates to the years 1467-71 of Edward IV's reign. Warwick and Edward IV quarrel over the marriage of the King's sister Margaret, are reconciled but again alienated because, according to the author, the king has attempted to outrage the modesty of Warwick's daughter Anne. According to history the quarrel was over the King's own marriage. The King-maker then restores the weak Henry VI, but the restoration is short-lived, for in the fighting that follows Warwick is killed and the Lancastrian cause lost. Into these historical events is woven a tragic love story.

Harold. Based on the career of Harold, the last Saxon king of England who was killed at Hastings in 1066, the novel relates the tragic romance of Harold's love for Edith 'the fair'.

Disraeli's first novel *Vivian Grey* (1826) was a picture of a dandy, giving a romantic account of his early days. Those that followed—*The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy* (1833)—were the most fantastic romances of their kind giving in a flamboyant style, brilliant pictures of fashionable life redolent of oriental splendour. They have an autobiographical bias, but for all their poses of romance, poetry and worldiness their underlying theme is the young aristocrat's responsibility to society. These were followed by the famous trilogy: *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847) which embody his political philosophy in a humorous and engaging style. After a long interval of nearly a quarter of a century he resumed the political theme in *Lothair* (1870) and *Endymion* (1880) with lesser emphasis.

Endymion has an additional personal interest. The character of St. Barbe, an envious social climber, is a caricature of Thackeray.

Thackeray had attacked Disraeli for his Jewishness in *Codlingsby* (1847); Disraeli retaliated seventeen years after his death.

Disraeli's political philosophy preached in the House of Commons as well as in his novels may be briefly summarised as follows.

According to Disraeli "the condition of England" question could be solved by the union of the Crown, the Church and the Aristocracy. In the selfish strife of parties, power has come to be concentrated in an oligarchy which has reduced the Crown to a cipher and the common people to serfs. In feudal times the Church and the Aristocracy combined to protect the people. Now it is upto young aristocrats, 'Young England Party' freed from the old Tory orthodoxy to lead the country and be guardians and protectors of the rights of the people.

Disraeli's dazzling political career and his romances are all of a piece. He preached his doctrine of Tory Democracy in Parliament and in his books. Tory democracy has become a fact and has been in action now for quite sometime, but the topicality of his novels has not appreciably affected their appeal. The maxims that lie scattered in them are still quoted and not only by politicians. Disraeli is not all glittering rhetoric; behind it lies serious thought and worldly wisdom. Sample these—

A smile for a friend, and a sneer for the world, is the way to govern mankind (*Vivian Grey*).

No Government can be long secure without a formidable opposition (*Coningsby*).

For life in general there is but one decree. Youth is a blunder; Manhood a struggle; Old Age a regret. (*Ibid.*)

Genius when young is divine (*Ibid.*)

Paradoxical, even fatuous as it may seem, Disraeli regarded debt as a great stimulant to action.

"Oh, my debts", exclaims Fakredeen in *Tancred*, "I feel your presence like that of guardian angels! If I be lazy, you prick me to action; if elate, you subdue me to reflection, and thus it is that you alone can secure that continuous yet controlled energy which conquers mankind."

Disraeli's place as a distinguished, if not a great man of letters, is secure.

R.D. Blackmore. Though R.D. Blackmore (1825-1900) receives scant notice in literary histories—some of them don't mention him at all—his *Lorna Doone* (1869) is one of the most thrilling historical romances in English, not unworthy of Sir Walter himself. The period he brings back to life in this novel is that of Charles II and James I, and we have glimpses of Judge Jeffreys of the "Bloody Assizes" notoriety, of Duke of Monmouth's ill-fated rebellion and of the Duke of Marlborough.

Lorna Doone. The story centres round John Ridd, a yeoman of Exmoor, and his love Lorna Doone held captive by his enemies—

the robber band of the Doones driven from Scotland and now settled in the fastnesses of the western hills of the South of England. They have killed John's father and have committed robberies and murders on a large scale in the neighbourhood. To execute vengeance on them, an expedition is organised under the leadership of John, but not before he has singly rescued Lorna Doone and entrusted her to his mother's care. John has attracted favourable notice of Jeffreys and the gang is liquidated with the support of John's uncle Reuben Huckaback, Tom Faggus, retired robber who has married John's sister Annie, and Jeremy Stickles an officer of the King's Bench. Meanwhile Lorna Doone is disclosed by her old Italian nurse to be the kidnapped daughter of the late Earl of Dugal. She is summoned to London to claim her estate and the Court of Chancery makes her a ward of the Earl of Brandir. John despairs of marrying Lorna because of the disparity in their status. But luck is on his side. It so happens that he saves the life of the Earl of Brandir when he is attacked by a gang of political desperados. For this service King James makes John a Knight. Of equal status with Lorna now, they go to the altar. The wedding is hardly over, however, when a shot is fired and Lorna is wounded. The act is Carver's, the lone survivor of the Doones. John mounts his horse and after a hot chase during which a bullet strikes him, he fights Carver and leaves him helplessly sinking in a bog. Lorna and John recover from their wounds and live happily, freed from the terror of the Doones.

George Borrow (1803-81), an eccentric genius difficult to place in any specific category, may nevertheless be conveniently considered here, for though his work is mostly travel literature, it is inextricably mixed with fiction. The son of a military officer he tried unsuccessfully a literary career in London and then became an agent of The Bible Society. In this capacity he travelled in Spain peddling Bibles, and used his experiences in *The Gipsies in Spain* (1840) and *The Bible in Spain* (1843). The later *Wild Wales* (1862) is also a travel-book. The experiences of his boyhood and early youth found expression in *Lavengro* (1851) and *Romany Rye* (1857). His best and most popular work is *Lavengro*, *The Bible in Spain* being a close second.

The extraordinary experiences of an eccentric, unconventional person, the open-air atmosphere and a plain straightforward style combine to give a rare charm to Borrow's books. Watts-Dunton, who knew him well, vouches for Borrow's sincerity, though some have detected affectation in his eccentricity.

Lavengro is part of a work which, whether novel or not, is completed in its sequel *Romany Rye* written seven years later. *Lavengro*, which in gipsy language means Wordmaster or Philologist, was the name given to Borrow by Ambrose Smith, a real contemporary gipsy of Norfolk. He appears in the novel as Jasper Petulengro.

The book gives in a plain style an account of the author's wanderings as a boy with his father, a recruiting officer in the army; of his desultory schooling at Edinburgh High School; of his mastering almost all European languages in East Anglia, as also of Romany.

the Gipsy language through his accidental acquaintance with the gipsy family of Jasper Petulengro, which develops into friendship; of his sojourn at the age of eighteen in London as a literary hack during which he helped to compile the *Newgate Calendar* (Collection of criminals' lives and trials); of his writing in four or five days a story which brought him £20; of his setting out South-West as a tramp; of his career as a tinker; of his being poisoned by gipsies and saved by some itinerant Welsh preachers; of his being taken by them to the Welsh border; of his thrilling fight with a ferocious rival the Flaming Tinman; of his life with the tall, wandering girl Isopel Berners (in separate tents); of their sheltering a driver whose coach had floundered close to their tents in a storm; of his speculation that they were an eloped couple who had married in Gretna Green. At this point the narrative ends abruptly.

The same difficulty of classification justifies the inclusion here of 'Lewis Carroll' (1832-98) whose *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871) have already been noticed in connection with his Nonsense Verse.

Mrs. Oliphant (1828-1879), the male counte-part of Trollope, deserves more extended notice. Like him she wrote for money, which she badly needed for the support of her and her brother's children. Though immensely popular like Trollope and not without real and varied gifts, she has shared the common fate of excessive production and is all but forgotten. Her best novels are those comprised in the series called *The Chronicles of Carlingford* (1853-66). Her various talent is shown in her supernatural novels *Beleagured City* (1880), *A little Pilgrim in the Unseen* (1882) and in her many Scottish Tales.

Among the popular didactic novelists of the mid-century were Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901), Mrs. Craik (1826-87) and Thomas Hughes (1822-96). In Miss Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853) the hero forgives the enemy who has done him a grave injury, nurses him through his serious illness, catches the disease and dies. In Mrs. Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1857) a poor orphan by industry and honesty rises to an honourable position. Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) is the story of an ordinary boy at Rugby under Dr. Arnold, highlighting the brutalities as well as the loyalties of a public school.

Taylor. Colonel Philip Meadows Taylor (1808-76) wrote several stories on Indian subjects, the most famous being *The Confessions of a Thug* (1839).

Henry Kingsley (1830-76), brother of Charles Kingsley, is remembered for his *Renshoe* (1862)—the exciting story of the misfortunes of Charles Renshoe, his service in the Crimean War, his return and restoration to his inheritance. It is distinguished for its characterization, humour and chivalry.

Mrs. Henry Wood (1844-87) is best remembered for the very popular sensation novel *East Lynne* (1861).

William Black (1841-98), Scottish war correspondent in the Franco-

Russian War, enjoyed great popularity in late-Victorian period with his Scottish novels *A Daughter of Heth* (1871), *A Princess of Thule* (1873) and *Macleod of Dare* (1879).

Sir Walter Besant (1836-1901), a prolific writer, is best known for *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882), a novel which drew public attention to poverty and social evils in the East end of London and led to the establishment of People's Palace, an intellectual and cultural centre in that quarter.

J.H. Shorthouse (1834-1903) and William Hale White (1829-1913) attained wide popularity by their religious novels. The former's *John Inglesant* (1880), placed in the Commonwealth period, deals with High church ideals; the latter's *The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* (1881) and *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance* (1885) trace the author's progress from dissenting orthodoxy to agnosticism.

The period 1880-1900 produced such an abundant crop of novels—most of them romantic—that it is impossible to deal with all of them adequately within the limits of our space. Only a few of the more important authors can be noticed here briefly.

Ouida (pseudonym of Louise de Ramee, 1839-1907) was the daughter of an English father and French mother. She is credited with forty novels of various kinds besides stories for children and other things. Her novels are exciting, glamorous, rather naughty and for her time daringly outspoken for a woman-writer. She was extremely popular with the multitude, though not with critics. *Under Two Flags* (1868) is generally accounted her best novel.

William Demorgan (1839-1917), an artist associate of Morris, wrote more than half a dozen novels of which the best are *Joseph Vance* (1906) and *Alice for Short* (1907).

Marie Corelli (1854-1924) was all the rage in the 1890s and early years of this century for the thrilling romances such as *A Romance of Two Worlds*, *Sorrows of Satan*, *Thelma*, *The Land of the Midnight Sun*, *The Young Diana* and *The Secret Power*. Despite her theatricality she appealed to the public because of her gift of sweeping narrative and her firm moral convictions. She has faded out now.

Hall Caine (1853-1931) enjoyed wide popularity with a large number of novels including the well-known *The Eternal City* (1901) and *The Prodigal Son* (1904).

Sir Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1923) exploited his African experiences in the popular romances of *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), *She* (1887) and *Ayesha or the Return of She* (1905).

Stanley Weyman (1855-1928), a lesser figure than Haggard, is remembered for his historical romances such as *Count Hannibal* (1901) and *Chippinge* (1906).

Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863-1933) creator of Ruritania won enormous popularity by *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894) and *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898).

Sir Arthur Quiller Couch ('Q' 1863-1944) joined the band of romancers with his delightful tales of the 'Delectable Duchy' of Cornwall: *Dead Man's Rock* (1887), *The Astonishing History of Troy Town* (1888), *The Splendid Spur* (1889) and others.

Maurice Hewlett (1861-1923) poet, novelist and essayist is remembered for his medieval romance *The Forest Lovers* (1898) and historical novels *The Life and Death of Richard Yea-and-Nay* (Richard the Lion-hearted, 1900) and *The Queen's Quair* (about Mary Queen of Scots, 1904).

This period is also remarkable for the emergence of a very large number of women novelists. It was the period of the 'New Woman', the generation of women who had received higher education and the question of woman's relationship to man was seriously raised and debated by them in their novels. Most of these novels were propagandist and sounded a note of revolt. It must not be supposed, however, that all women approved of this revolt. The most learned and the most serious woman novelist of the day, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, for example, did not. Till the end of the century woman was still regarded as the weaker sex who needed man's protection. Her femininity with its concomitant virtue of 'innocence' was considered her greatest asset. The most powerful influence in demolishing this notion was that of Ibsen. So far as women novelists are concerned though the first note of revolt had been sounded as far back as *Jane Eyre* (1847), the novel that had the greatest impact on young minds was *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) by Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), a South African. Among others who swelled the chorus of protest the most notable were Sarah Grand (*The Heavenly Twins*, 1893), M.P. Willcox (*The Wingless Victory*, 1887), and May Sinclair (*The Divine Fire* 1904, *Mary Oliver* 1919). None of these feminist novels except *The Story of an African Farm* has much intrinsic worth. Nevertheless, they served to focus public attention on a movement that was to culminate in the suffragist agitation of the early years of the present century. That women now enjoy equal rights with men in almost all spheres of life is due to the pioneering efforts of women novelists as well as to the advocacy of such feminists as J.S. Mill (*Subjection of Women*), Meredith and others. All honour to them.

CHAPTER 42

VICTORIAN PROSE

Carlyle: his style—*Sartor Resartus*—Ruskin: *Art* criticism—Social criticism—Arnold: Literary criticism—Social criticism—Religious criticism—Newman: *Apologia*—*Idea of a University*—Macaulay—Morris—Pater—Symonds—Symonds—Essayists and Critics—Biography and Memoirs etc.

We have characterised the Victorian period as one of democracy and reform. These two words encompass changes in political, social, intellectual and religious fields unparalleled in any previous period of British history. Material prosperity coupled with brilliant prospects for its indefinite continuance opened by science and technology induced in most people a mood of optimism and complacency loudly voiced by Macaulay. More serious thinkers, however, looked upon this material prosperity not as 'progress' but degeneration in as much as it was achieved at the cost of the spirit. According to them it was of little avail to the Victorians if they gained the whole world and lost their own soul.

By the 30s and 40s the generous enthusiasm aroused by the French Revolution had ebbed away. It was followed by a revulsion of feeling and a mood of disillusion and despair. The old order had collapsed but Utopia was nowhere in sight. Though Darwin's *Origin of Species* was still far off, the Benthamites or philosophical radicals, as they were called, had unsettled men's minds by their rational and secular approach to religion. People were perplexed, looking for renewal of faith and hope. It was for such a restless and perplexed generation that Carlyle wrote *Sartor Resartus*, Ruskin *Unto This Last*, Arnold *Culture and Anarchy* and Newman *Tracts for the Times*. They denounced materialism, demonstrated its ugliness, and showed, each in his own way, the way to salvation.

Carlyle (1795-1881). Thomas Carlyle born in the village of Ecclefechan in Dumfries-shire was the eldest son of a Calvinist mason and small farmer. He was educated in local schools and at the Edinburgh University which he left without a degree. After schoolmastering for four years (1814-18) and perfunctory studies of Divinity and Law he decided on literature. About this time he lost

faith in Christianity, took up German studies, was deeply influenced by Goethe whom he translated and with whom he corresponded. He visited London, met Coleridge and wrote his *Life of Schiller* (1825). In 1826, he married Jane Welsh, an intelligent and witty lady of higher social status with some property. He retired to her farm of Craigenputtock and there between 1828 and 1834 amassed a lot of learning, and wrote his *Miscellaneous Essays*, *Sartor Resartus* and part of *The French Revolution*. In 1834, he moved to London where he lived till the end.

Sartor Resartus was rejected by publishers and appeared in instalments in *Frazer's Magazine* (1834). It was published in book form in 1838 after his success with *The French Revolution* (1837). To supplement his income he delivered a series of lectures, the most important of which is *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841). His socio-political works consist of *Chartism* (1839), *Past and Present* (1843) and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850). His historical works besides *The French Revolution* are *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* (1845) and the *Monumental History of Frederick the Great* (1858-65) over which he had spent fourteen years. His *Life of John Sterling* appeared in 1861.

In 1865, he was elected Rector of his old university, defeating Disraeli, but his joy was marred by the sudden death of his wife from heart disease. During the remaining years of his life he wrote nothing of importance beyond *Early Kings of Norway* which was included in his collected edition. In 1874, he accepted the German Order of Merit awarded to him in recognition of his *Frederick the Great*, but refused a title and pension offered by Disraeli, the Premier, of whom he had always spoken in disparaging terms. His *Reminiscences* and the *Letters and Memorials* of Jane Welsh were published after his death. A burial in Westminster Abbey was offered, but according to his own wish he was buried in his village churchyard.

Carlyle is not popular today. His faults are so obvious that no one who reads even a page of his can fail to notice them. His style is ugly, his speech harsh, his manner downright, uncompromising, with complete absence of the graces associated with good writing. The most effective deterrent is, of course, the style. To say it is ugly is an understatement. It is a style full of shrieks—capitals, italics, dashes, exclamations—strange coinages ('pilgrimings'), unorthodox comparatives ('beautifuller', 'painfullest'), wilful inversions, telegraphic omissions and bewildering syntax. Add to this, highly poetic images, a profusion of German words and phrases and his own far-fetched bombast ("Baphometric Fire-baptism", "Auscultatorship"); and you have a style irritating, if not baffling in the last degree. To trace it to the German Fichter or to the Scottish Urquhart, as Professor Saintsbury does, tells us but little, for in the last analysis it is Carlyle's own. In its intense individuality and extreme eccentricity it has no parallel in English prose.

One is certainly reminded of Meredith, but Meredith is a poseur

and there is nothing of the poseur in Carlyle. In fact, it is his utter sincerity, his moral gravity and earnestness that gives Carlyle's extravagant style its wonderful power and impressiveness. And of no book of Carlyle's is this truer than of *Sartor Resartus*. No one can read this book and remain the same person afterwards.

Sartor Resartus is a strange mixture of autobiography and German mysticism. It sets forth "the philosophy of clothes" propounded by the imaginary German Professor of 'Things in General' Deogenes Teufelsdröckh. He has left behind a chaotic jumble of papers which Carlyle as editor is supposed to put together to form something like a coherent biography. Hence the title *Sartor Resartus* or "Tailor Repatched", the tailor being the "Clothes professor" and Carlyle the patcher.

The clothes philosophy may be summarised as follows. The naked body represents the fundamental truths or eternal verities. They never change. The clothes covering the body are the ideas, laws, customs, and institutions which must keep on changing. Clothes wear out; so do human laws and institutions when they have become effete and are unable to express the truth and protect society. Hence the need for a new suit of clothes, a fresh orientation of concepts and institutions.

By this analogy Carlyle wanted to draw the attention of his restless epoch to the need for a living religion, since the old religion of dogmatic formulas was dead or was fast dying, having lost its power to heal or sustain the human spirit. The restlessness of his age was due to its want of a real religion. Individuals suffered for they had lost their faith. The story of Teufelsdröckh's temporary loss of faith, his consequent suffering and final redemption is substantially Carlyle's own story. Except for some humorous exaggerations about the Professor such as attributing to him Carlyle's own tentatively held absurd opinions and theories, the parallel is close. Teufelsdröckh's village of Entepfuhl is Carlyle's Ecclefechan, the Professor's romance with the beautiful Blumine and its abrupt end is Carlyle's own romance with Miss Margaret Gordon with a similar unhappy end. For a time as a young man the Professor had lost his faith, was tortured by doubt which had deepened into atheism. This coupled with his disappointment in love had thrown him into a state of despondency and despair from which he sought relief in aimless wanderings through all quarters of the globe, "in strange countries" and "in savage deserts". During this period he was a prey to nameless fears, but turn where he would life's response to his appeals was negative ("The Everlasting Nay"); he found no healing for his wounded spirit, he could not "escape from his own shadow." Then his agony was ended in June 1821 when he was walking down the Rue Saint Thomas de l'Enfer by a sudden illumination or spiritual revelation which made him a free man—free from all fears.

Substitute Leith Walk in Edinburgh for the Paris street of Rue

Saint Thomas de l'Enfer and you have Carlyle's own story of his suffering and redemption.

"And yet, strangely enough, I lived in a continual, indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what: it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heaven and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured.

"Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capital or Suburbs, was I, one sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little Rue Saint Thomas de l'Enfer, among civic rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: "What art thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sumtotal of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; I will meet it and defy it!" And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me forever. I was strong, of unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time the temper of my misery was changed: not Fear or whining Sorrow was it, but Indignation and grim fire-eyed Defiance.

"Thus had the EVERLASTING No (*das ewige Nein*) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole Me stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said: "Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)"; to which my whole Me now made answer: "I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!"

"It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometric Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly there upon began to be a Man."

This illumination was like waking from a nightmare. Having achieved victory over his imaginary fears which indeed were nothing but shadows of his ego or little self, the next step was to realize the essentially spiritual character of life ("The Everlasting Yea").

"O Nature!—Or what is Nature? Ha! Why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the "Living Garment of God?" O Heavens, is it, in very deed, He, then that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?"

These are the echoes of Wordsworth's mysticism. A more practical mysticism may be read in the following extracts:

So true is it, what I then say, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero then; thou hast the world under thy feet Well did the Wisest of our time write: "It is only with Renunciation (Enstagen) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin."

"Close thy Byron: Open thy Goethe."

There is in man a Higher than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness!

Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him.

Two other points which Carlyle emphasizes are: first, know what you can work at and work with a will, for idleness is a sin; second, do the duty which lies nearest thee.

In short, Carlyle's message to his generation was: not self-gratification but self-renunciation is the true law of life. Only through renunciation can you achieve Blessedness or Peace which is immeasurably higher than Happiness. Your spiritual problems cannot be solved through rationalistic logic and speculation but through the feeling of Wonder and of Reverence for the Mystery of the universe which is nothing but the outward manifestation of the indwelling God.

Though Carlyle speaks of the need for replacing "the dead letter of religion" by "the living spirit of religion", he does not prescribe any creedal religion. He pleads only for a mystical attitude of reverence for a Higher Power which is the essence of religion. His appeal is to our moral and spiritual nature.

It will be seen, however, that though Carlyle was emancipated from the dogmas of Calvinism, he was emotionally attached to the core of it as is evidenced by his insistence on the inevitability of punishment following sin. That he was influenced by German thought cannot be denied, but this influence has been exaggerated. He was at bottom a Scot and Calvinist. The harshness of the Puritan as revealed in his crude, blunt and intemperate speech proclaims the ancestral elements that had made him up.

Outside *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle's most enduring achievement is in the sphere of history. But his historical works are all informed by the spirit of *Sartor Resartus*. He does not forget his mission of teacher and prophet. If *Sartor Resartus* is literature as scripture, *The French Revolution* and *Cromwell* are literature as history. *The French Revolution* is an illustration of the "Clothes Philosophy" in action. The Revolution is seen as God's judgment on the collective sin of France—of her Kings and clergy, statesmen and politicians. It is the most brilliant history of that upheaval unmatched for vividness of concrete detail, drama and grandeur. Some errors have since been detected, but they are trivial. The conception of

the Revolution as presented by Carlyle is today the world's. The same can be said about his *Cromwell*. Previous historians had only heaped calumnies on Cromwell, but Carlyle effected a complete reversal of public opinion about his character and achievement.

According to Carlyle, history is divine scripture whose "plenary inspiration" no one can question. This dogmatic assertion is fraught with dangerous implications. If everything treated in history is divinely inspired, it means that success is proof of right, that "Might is Right". It is charitable to suppose that Carlyle did not mean this, that he meant that the universe is so designed that one who is right will have most might. Unfortunately, however, his idolisation of the tyrannical Frederick the Great belies our charitable interpretation.

While Carlyle's basic conceptions of history are implied in Teufelsdröckh's speculations, they find clearer and more comprehensive utterance in *Heroes and Hero-Worship* and *The Heroic in History*. They are summed up in his well-known pronouncement: "The History of the World is but the Biography of Great Men." As against this is the scientific view of such historians as Buckle and Taine who guided by the theory of evolution regard history as a process governed by general laws. They regard the great men of history as products of the times. Carlyle, on the other hand, ignores the conditions of the times, and regards the great man not as a creation of his age but its creator. Whatever the merits or demerits of the scientific view, the point that concerns us is that Carlyle's worship of great men led him to decry democracy and to exalt plutocracy and dictatorship. He even believed in a fundamental difference between master-races and slave-races and gave his qualified approval to slavery even after slavery had been abolished. Like Disraeli, Henley, Kipling and others he was a supporter of British Imperialism.

In his socio-political writings—*Chartism, Past and Present*, *Latter Day Pamphlets*—he praised the Medieval Age and attacked the corruptions of Victorian society. The last of these is a savage satire on British politics, law, justice, etc. which is reminiscent of Swift. In these works he appears a curious mixture of Radical and Conservative, though he claimed himself to be "the quietest of radicals."

That Carlyle was a genius admits of no doubt. As a man, however, he was not an amiable character. As a sufferer from chronic dyspepsia he was silent, gloomy and grumpy. That he was not devoid of a sense of humour is clear from *Sartor Resartus*, but it is doubtful if he was given to laughter. We are told that Teufelsdröckh laughed only once, and one is tempted to believe the same of Carlyle. He appreciated neither the gin nor the humour of Lamb. Like a good Calvinist he was intolerant of many things. He hated materialism, the gospel of wealth, idleness, science, democracy, 'progress', art and poetry that merely amuse. He was rigid and unbending in his opinions and would make no concessions to those who differed from him. As against these foibles, he had a high notion of his

calling and lived upto his ideals which no lure of money, praise, or power could make him compromise. It is as easy to underrate him today as it is to believe that during the latter part of his life and for nearly thirty years after his death he enjoyed worldwide reputation as the greatest teacher and prophet of England. He was the strongest formative influence on such distinguished men of the younger generation as Ruskin Tennyson, Browning, Dickens, Thackeray and Kingsley. If he is not read today it is because we have seen too many of his 'heroes' in action in our century—in Germany, Italy, Russia, China. This, however, should not blind us to the positive aspect of his genius. His teaching is as relevant today as it was in his time—indeed more. He will be ever remembered as one of the greatest moral forces of 19th century England.

Ruskin (1819-1900). Carlyle's attack on Victorian commercialism and complacency was reinforced by that of Ruskin who acknowledged him as his master. Unlike Carlyle, however, he did not rant and rave but delivered his attack in a gentler and more persuasive manner. Though sometimes as dogmatic as the master, he was more clearheaded, more tolerant, and more balanced in his judgments.

John Ruskin was born in London where his father was a prosperous wine merchant. He was educated at home and at Oxford. We learn from *Praeterita* that his upbringing was unusually strict. His father, a lover of books and pictures, read to him and his mother good literature—Shakespeare, Scott, *Don Quixote*, etc. while his mother, an orthodox Scotch woman, made him read the Bible regularly and commit large portions of it to memory. Her spartan discipline allowed him no toys and no company for fear lest her son be contaminated by the corrupt world. These disadvantages were, however, compensated by advantages equally unusual. He accompanied his father on his summer trips for business or pleasure through England, Scotland, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. The boy thus became acquainted with natural scenery, beautiful castles and cathedrals and rare works of painting and sculpture. At seventeen he entered Christ's College, Oxford, where he won the Newdigate Prize for his *Salsette and Elephanta*, a poem on the dawn of Christianity in India. His studies were interrupted by illness which took him to Italy where he remained two years. He returned to Oxford but took only a pass degree. In 1848, he married a Scottish lady for whom he had written eight years before the delightful story *The King of the Golden River*. The marriage was, however, unhappy and was annulled after six years. Being a dutiful son Ruskin continued to live with his parents, and it is possible that his mother's meddling was responsible for the break-up of the marriage. Ruskin did not marry again. He had at least three disappointments in love, one before his marriage and two after its dissolution.

His father died in 1864 and he came into a large inheritance most of which he gave away in charity. After the death of his mother in 1871 he left London and settled at Brantwood on Coniston Lake in the beloved Lake country of Wordsworth. In 1870, he was elected

the first Professor of Fine Art at Oxford, which post he occupied 1870-79 and again for a year 1883-84. His health had broken down in 1878 and thereafter he was subject to occasional attacks of brain fever. This gives some colour to his wife's allegation of mental instability.

The number of Ruskin's works is so large that to name them all can only bewilder the reader. Only the most important of them will be considered here. The first twenty years of his activity were devoted to art criticism and the remaining years principally to social criticism. His lectures at Oxford had as much to do with social questions as with art.

His works on art are: *Modern Painters* (1843-60) in five volumes, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) in three volumes, a work almost as ambitious as the first named. Though some tenuous connection between literature and the fine arts can be traced as far back as Dryden's essay on 'Poetry and Painting', through Joshua Reynold's *Discourses*, Hazlitt's *Conversations of James Northcote*, and Tennyson's *Palace of Art* and *Dream of Fair Women*—to name only the most important links—it was not till the advent of Ruskin that art subjects were firmly established in the orbit of literature. In these three great works Ruskin gave a comprehensive description of almost every masterpiece of architecture and painting in Europe in a style whose magnificence matches that of the works described. No one before him had given such a large scale treatment to art.

Modern Painters. The first volume was written in a mood of anger to defend the famous landscape painter Turner (1795-1851) against the attacks made on his paintings, but over the years it developed into a comprehensive exposition of the principles of true art.

The Seven Lamps of Architecture. The seven lamps or virtues which architecture should embody are Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. These virtues suggest a scheme of life which Ruskin found reflected in the Gothic architecture of the Middle Ages. Great art is religious in spirit and can be produced only in an age of faith. The modern age is the reverse of the medieval, and must go back to that age of faith before it can produce sacred art.

The Stones of Venice. This great work extols Gothic and condemns Renaissance architecture as an irreligious and corrupt product of Greek paganism, its centre being Venice. Ruskin acclaimed the Gothic because it gave free play to the imagination and intelligence of the individual workman. It is imperfect—it is crude and savage—but it is noble because it is free. A modern building is perfect—in its symmetry, uniformity, polish—but it is ignoble because it is slave, the product not of a living and growing human being but of an 'animated tool', a machine. It is here for the first time that Ruskin relates art to social and economic conditions, a subject which became the chief concern of his later years.

Works of Social Criticism. From 1860, Ruskin occupied himself with economic and social problems in which Carlyle was his teacher. Carlyle attributed the evils of his day to moral cowardice and his remedy was strength, the strength of a hero or dictator. Ruskin, on the other hand, found the evil in lack of beauty and his remedy was to spread through the community a taste for beauty, physical as well as spiritual, and to realize it in complete and harmonious living free from slavery of the machine. In his study of art he had discovered that art which is the expression of inner beauty can not flourish in ugly surroundings. He hated industrialism not only for its exploitation of labour but also for spoiling the face of English landscape by creating the Black Country (Lancashire). Like Carlyle he attacked 'the dismal science' of current Political Economy, with its *laissez faire*, 'inexorable laws', and 'economic man' who is guided by no motive other than that of 'profit'. It took no account of the beautiful and the ethical. Ruskin had a profound sense of the vital interrelation not only between art and morals, but also between art and economics. And he preached his economic doctrines in a series of books or treatises the most influential of which are *Unto This Last*, *Munera Pulveris*, *Sesame and Lilies*, *The Crown of Wild Olive* and *Fors Clavigera*.

Unto This Last (1860-62) began to appear in instalments in the *Cornhill Magazine* which had just started under the editorship of Thackeray. After three essays had appeared there was such a storm of protest that their further publication had to be stopped by the friendly editor. The treatise in its present form has four essays and was published in 1862. The title taken from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard was intended to show that the precepts of the orthodox economics of the commercial classes were just the reverse of those of Christianity they professed. The positive points made are: (a) Wealth consists of "things that lead to life", (b) Self-interest and satisfaction of material needs is not the only aim of life; righteousness and human ideals are quite as important.

Munera Pulveris (1862-63) begun in *Frazer's Magazine* under the editorship of Froude met the same fate as *Unto This Last*. Froude was also a friend, but after a few chapters had appeared, he stopped further publication because of popular clamour. They appeared in book form in 1872. It elaborates the theme of *Unto This Last* defining wealth more fully as "things essentially valuable, intrinsic value being the life-giving power of anything." The intrinsic value of a cluster of flowers, for example, is its life-enhancing power, its power of giving joy. This value is not lessened by human contempt and it is far greater than its exchange value (its money price).

The history of these two publications is a capital illustration of the public's fanatical faith in orthodox economics. The principles of *laissez faire* capitalism were to them more sacred than those of the Bible.

The Crown of Wild Olive (1866). This little book contains three lectures: Work, Traffic, and War. The lecture on Work was deli-

vered in the Working Men's Institute at Camberwell (1865), that on Traffic in the Town Hall, Bradford, and the one on War at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich (1865).

The lecture on Work deals with the folly of capitalists who force their workmen to produce articles which are useless or wasteful such as iron bars. Traffic (in the sense of buying and selling) deals with architecture in its relation to religion. Ruskin was asked to give his advice on the style of architecture for the Exchange which the people of Bradford were about to build. He told them that the style of architecture cannot be delivered by a visiting expert, it is something that grows out of "national life and character"; "and it is produced by a prevalent and eager national taste, or desire for beauty." Then follows an attack on capitalist economy of exploitation and on the worship of Mammon. The lecture ends with an appeal for sanctifying wealth into "Commonwealth".

In the lecture on War he maintains that "war is the foundation of all the arts; and it is also the foundation of all the high virtues and faculties of men." Then a distinction is drawn between noble and ignoble warfare. A noble war is that which is fought for the defence of the country or for protecting the weak. War is ignoble when it is waged for dominion or because of a personal quarrel between rulers.

The title is in allusion to the prize given at the Olympic games. It was not a crown of gold but a crown of wild olive. The idea is that we should not work for a false idea of reward.

Fors Clavigera (1871-84) is a collection of letters published periodically and addressed to the working men of England. They are on a great variety of subjects, the underlying theme being removal of poverty and misery. In 1871, Ruskin founded the Guild of St. George for the practical realisation of his socialistic gospel. Every member had to contribute one-tenth of his income for philanthropic purposes; to this he added liberally from his own pocket. He also made several industrial experiments such as the revival of hand-made linen industry in Langdale.

Sesame and Lilies (1865), the most popular of Ruskin's books, is more literary than social in its interest. 'Sesame' is the magic word in the story of *Ali Baba* which opens the gates of treasure, while 'Lilies' taken from *Isiah* is a symbol of beauty, purity and peace. 'Sesame' appropriately refers to the first of the two lectures, viz. 'Of Kings Treasuries' which deals with books and reading. The second lecture 'Of Queen's Gardens' deals with women of the upper classes, their education, sphere of work, duties, etc. To these lectures which properly constitute the book a third was added on 'The Mystery of Life'. This is autobiographical, dealing with his own failure in life. It is sad and pessimistic and ill assorts with the other two. Of these two Ruskin is reported to have said that if read with *Unto This Last* they contain the gist of the chief truths he had endeavoured to preach all his life.

Praeterita (1885-89). Ruskin's uncompleted autobiography written in his last years was published at irregular intervals between 1885 and 1889. It gives a detailed account of his childhood in an exquisitely garrulous and unreserved manner.

As in the case of Carlyle, it is difficult to label Ruskin Radical or Conservative. He is a curious blend of radicalism and parochialism. In *Time and Tide* (1867) he says that no one should be allowed to marry until he has done some work for the community. He always insisted on government, authority and obedience in the field of industry as in any other sphere. Like Carlyle, again, he had nothing but scorn for liberty. It was more important for the workman to have decent competence than the vote. He described himself as 'High Tory of the old School', and yet he was damned as a socialist—an ugly word in his time.

In all his socialistic preaching Ruskin pleaded for justice rather than charity. Charity, he conceded, was greater than justice, but justice was its foundation. He castigated the capitalist not because he made money—there's nothing wrong in that—but because he appropriated the whole of it to himself. 'But I beg of you to observe that there is a wide difference between being captains or governors of work and taking the profits of it. It does not follow, because you are general of an army, that you are to take all the treasure or land, it wins'. Again: 'and all our hearts have been betrayed by the plausible impiety of the modern economist, that "To do the best for yourself, is finally to do the best for others." Friends, our great Master said not so; and most absolutely we shall find this world is not made so. Indeed, to do the best for others, is finally to do the best for ourselves.'

He subscribes to Carlyle's gospel of work, but there is a difference. "It is not that men are ill-fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure." The Calvinist in Carlyle regarded pleasure with suspicion. The more humane Ruskin made due allowance for pleasure in work. But how can workers have pleasure in work that deadens and stupifies them by its monotony? In the so-called division of labour a man is made to make not "a pin or a nail" but the "point of a pin, or the head of a nail." Thus no mill-hand is a craftsman. He is denied the satisfaction of self-fulfilment.

Like Carlyle, Ruskin was deeply religious in spirit though not in letter. He had moved away from the puritan orthodoxy of his mother, but not from her rigidity in moral rectitude of conduct. He spoke contemptuously of praying and psalm-singing as "beggings and chantings." 'It is enjoying ourselves'; it is not 'Divine Service'. "The one Divine work—the one ordered sacrifice—is to do justice" To him all the commandments of Christ were summed up in 'Seek Ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you'. What is more, he practised what he preached. He exhausted all his fortune in charities and supported himself, during his latter years, on income derived from his writings.

As is often the case with idealists, Ruskin's zeal for reform sometimes betrayed him into abourdities. He engaged his Oxford students in road making programmes, and denied that iron bars have any intrinsic value.

Ruskin's last years were darkened by ill health and by a sense of failure. If he failed, he failed nobly. Or rather he didn't fail at all. It is given to few to realize their dreams in their life-time. The age was one of reform and Ruskin's socialism whether assimilated to Maurice's Christian socialism or the later Fabian socialism made headway in the teeth of popular orthodox economics. Though his doctrines were dubbed 'lunatic' at the time, many of the reforms he advocated are now enshrined in the statute book. Reforms such as workers' housing, education of their children, old age pension, unemployment insurance, national education, etc. are no longer confined to Britain but have been adopted in almost all civilized countries of the world. And who knows but that his more radical and thorough-going reforms may also find acceptance sooner or later. His influence on Mahatma Gandhi is well known. Ruskin humanised economics.

If he humanised economics, he also spiritualised art. His theories of art created a revolution in the world of taste. He attacked the current view that "taste is one thing, morality another." He asserted that "good taste is essentially a moral quality," "and to teach taste is inevitably to form character." "Tell me what you like and I'll tell you what you are." This simple, direct connection between art and morality easily leads to his generalisations that good art is the product of an age of ardent faith and corrupt art is the product of a corrupt age. These generalisations are, perhaps, too sweeping, but allowing for exceptions the fundamental principle behind them is unquestionable. The misunderstanding of this principle is due to a confusion of the artist's feeling or aspiration with his outward conduct or character. An artist transfers his feeling or aspiration to a picture or sculpture, but due to weakness of character he may not be able to translate his beautiful feeling or aspiration into his conduct. Weakness of character and noble aspiration are not incompatible. Ruskin may be wrong in emphasis or in details, but he is essentially right.

However, the most important service rendered by Ruskin consists in his relating art to the practical ends of life. Art, he insisted, was not something meant exclusively for the enjoyment of a few aristocrats; it was a necessity of life even for the humblest individual. His social reform included the introduction of beauty in the lives and labours of the working classes. It is a part of the national education and diffusion of culture advocated by him in *Sesame and Lilies*.

By 1860s Ruskin had come to be recognised as the greatest authority on art. His praise of Turner and the pre-Raphaelites raised their reputation. A number of societies were formed to propagate his art theories. These continued to flourish until the first World

War, but disappeared in the topsyturvydom of culture that followed in its wake.

Ruskin's art criticism is not read today because his slogan of righteousness is no longer fashionable. One may, however, hope for its revival inasmuch as it is intimately related to his sociological doctrines which are highly esteemed everywhere and which can never become antiquated.

Ruskin was not only a great moral teacher; he was also a great stylist—one of the very greatest stylists in the language. Because of the versatility of his interests he had no one style but several. His early style, that of his art criticism, is characterised by Miltonic sentences running sometimes to the length of a whole page, artful and showy in their display of ornament and highly poetic in rhythm. It offends by its contrivance and excess. Ruskin later came to dislike it. In the treatises of the middle period dealing with his economic doctrines he moved to a simpler, more direct, and more controlled style. The sentences are shorter though still a little too spun out with a wealth of figures of speech and Biblical allusions. On the whole, however, this style is marked by genuine eloquence born of intense feeling, by clarity and by a breadth of learning which is astonishing. It is admirably adapted to its purpose, that of persuasion. It is best illustrated in *Unto This Last*, *Sesame and Lilies*, and *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

The style of his latest writings is too wordy and wayward, sometimes hysterical in its confused, dusky rhetoric.

Two passages from *The Crown of Wild Olive* follow:

Work

And here we have at last an inevitable distinction. There must be work done by the arms, or none of us could live. There must be work done by the brains, or the life we get would not be worth having. And the same men cannot do both. There is rough work to be done and rough men must do it; there is gentle work to be done, and gentlemen must do it; and it is physically impossible that one class should do, or divide, the work of the other. And it is of no use to try to conceal this sorrowful fact by fine words, and to talk to the workman about the honorableness of manual labour, and dignity of humanity. Rough work, honorable or not, takes the life out of us; and the man who has been heaving clay out of a ditch all night, or holding a collier's helm in a gale on a leeshore, or whirling white-hot iron at a furnace mouth, is not the same man at the end of his day, or night, as one who has been sitting in a quiet room, with everything comfortable about him, reading books, or classing butterflies, or painting pictures. If it is any comfort to you to be told that the rough work is the more honorable of the two, I should be sorry to take that much of consolation from you; and in some sense I need not. The rough work is at all events real, honest and, generally, though not always, useful; while the fine work is, a great deal of it, foolish and false as well as fine, and therefore dishonorable: but when both kinds are equally well and worthily done, the head's is the noble work, and the hand's the ignoble. Therefore, of all hand work whatsoever necessary for the maintenance of life, those old words, "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread" indicate that the inherent nature of it is one of calamity; and that the ground, cursed for our sake, casts also some shadow of degradation into our contest with its thorn and its thistle; so that all nations have held their days honorable, or 'holy', and constituted them 'holy-days' or 'holidays', by

making them days of rest; and the promise, which, among all our distant hopes, seems to cast the chief brightness over death, is that blessing of the dead who die in the Lord, that "they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

Traffic

I notice that among all the new buildings which cover your once wild hills, churches and schools are mixed in due, that is to say, in large proportion, with your mills and mansions; and I notice also that the churches and schools are almost always Gothic, and the mansions and mills are never Gothic. Will you allow me to ask precisely the meaning of this? For, remember, it is peculiarly a modern phenomenon. When Gothic was invented, houses were Gothic as well as churches; and when the Italian style superseded the Gothic, churches were Italian as well as houses. If there is a Gothic spire to the cathedral of Antwerp, there is a Gothic belfry to the Hotel de Ville at Brussels; if Inigo Jones builds an Italian Whithall, Sir Christopher Wren builds an Italian St. Paul's. But now you live under one school of architecture, and worship under another. What do you mean by doing this? Am I to understand that you are thinking of changing your architecture back to Gothic; and that you treat your churches experimentally, because it does not matter what mistakes you make in a church? Or am I to understand that you consider Gothic a pre-eminently sacred and beautiful mode of building, which you think, like the fine frankincense should be mixed for the tabernacle only, and reserved for your religious services? For if this be the feeling, though it may seem at first as if it were graceful and reverent, at the root of the matter, it signifies neither more nor less than that you have separated your religion from your life.

[Arnold (1822-88). Ruskin reinforced Carlyle's spiritual message by his plea for art, Mathew Arnold reinforced it by his plea for literature. Carlyle drew his inspiration from the Hebrews and the Germans, Ruskin from the Middle ages, but Arnold sought his from ancient Greeks. Arnold's poetry has already been considered, and the student is advised to refresh his memory with that appraisal for a better understanding of his literary and social criticism that follows.

Arnold abandoned poetry in 1857, the year of his appointment as Professor of Poetry at Oxford. The tragedy of *Merope* (1858) and *Last Poems* (1867) were his only productions in poetry after that year.

His poetry is elegiac; a deep note of melancholy runs through it. His prose, however, has an air of freedom, confidence, high spirits and gaiety. His prose writings fall into three classes: literary criticism, general social criticism and religious criticism.

His literary criticism is contained in *On Translating Homer* (1861) and *Essays in Criticism* (two series 1865, 1888). To these may be added his Preface to the 1853 volume of *Poems*. His criticism of society in general is contained in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *Friendship's Garland* (1871), *Mixed Essays* (1879), and *Discourses in America* (1885). Books containing his criticism of religion are: *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), *God and the Bible* (1876), and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877).

Like Carlyle and Ruskin, Arnold was disgusted with the degra-

dation of his times resulting from industrial revolution and like them was determined, so far as he could, to open the eyes of the prosperous middle class, who in their complacency glibly talked of prosperity and progress, and to bring about a change. He discovered that the root of the evil lay in the British lack of 'culture'. Culture is a wide embracing word covering the whole way of life of a people. It means many-sided development, the complete and harmonious perfection of man. Though literature, since it touches life at more points than any other art or science, is the most important agency of culture, it is not all. That is why Arnold did not confine himself to literature, his special province, but extended his inquiry to politics and religion.

Arnold's critical writings are all of a piece. The thesis of perfection through culture is common to them all. His political and religious criticism has lost much of its point today, but his literary criticism is of enduring interest and is more vital and influential today than it was in his own day. His modern successors, Eliot and Leavis, have only rung changes on it; they have added little of significance.

Literary Criticism. *On Translating Homer* and *The Study of Celtic Literature* are collections of lectures delivered during his professorial period. In the first, Arnold stresses the principle of preserving the spirit of the original. Homer is essentially noble, his style is rapid and grandly simple. Arnold applies his test to the translations by Chapman, Pope, Cowper and others and ends by concluding that the best medium for Homeric translation is the hexameter. He illustrates this strange conclusion by a few examples of his own.

In *The Study of Celtic Literature* he analyses the Celtic temperament. Sentiment is its predominating element which with love of beauty and spirituality constitutes its excellence. It is, however, rendered ineffectual by its lack of restraint, measure and proportion.

Essays in Criticism (1865, 1888). These two series of essays are Arnold's most important contributions to literary criticism. In the first collection he defines criticism, comes out for the first time with his attack on the 'Philistines' and enters a plea for cosmopolitanism in literature. The function of criticism, he says, is "to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas". To Arnold England was particularly deficient in criticism. The English, according to him, suffered from 'provinciality', they had narrow and closed minds that resisted fresh ideas. He dubbed them 'Philistines'. He urged the need of disinterested and well-informed criticism which would assimilate new ideas in thought and style from various sources to form a culture "of the centre". The best sources, he thought, were the ancient Greeks in poetry and the modern French in prose. The ancient Greece he had in mind was the century 530-430 B.C., the time of Pindar and Sophocles. They possessed in an eminent degree what he calls "the imaginative reason" which satisfies "the thinking power" and "the religious sense". It is

this balance between thought and religious emotion that is the chief quality demanded by the modern spirit in poetry. The modern spirit of prose needs clarity and sanity—qualities possessed by French.

Besides this plea for comparative study of literature and cosmopolitan culture, the first book contains essays on French and German authors and on Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius.

Essays in Criticism (second series) contains Arnold's most important essays on English literature. The first essay on 'The Study of Poetry', which had formed the Introduction to Ward's *English Poets* (1880) contains his famous definition of poetry as "a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty", warns against "personal" and "historic" estimates, and recommends the "touchstone method" for judging great poetry. This is followed by a survey of English poets from Chaucer to Swinburne. For a discussion of all these matters as well as of the precepts given in the Preface to the 1853 volume of poems, the reader is referred to the article on Arnold's poetry. The survey is followed by essays on Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Gray and others. The essay on Byron, like the others, is excellent, but the technique employed in it is peculiar as well as ingenious. Almost the whole of this essay is a quotation from Goethe. Arnold was impressed by Byron's power, but was held back from direct appreciation of that 'fleshy' poet by his ethical view of poetry. Arnold was an ardent Wordsworthian, and his prophecy that at the end of the century Wordsworth will be judged the greatest of the Romantic poets has proved true. His dismissal of Shelley as insubstantial has annoyed the poet's admirers, but it is pertinent to remind them that Arnold's view is shared by many unpretentious lovers of poetry. Arnold had natural affinities with Gray who never "spoke out" Gray's classical restraint and scanty production exactly describe Arnold's own poetry. His judgment that in his felicities of natural description Keats is with Shakespeare, has been widely acclaimed as a gem of criticism.

Social Criticism. Arnold's most important work of social criticism is *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). It is principally a plea for culture as the sovereign remedy for the evils of his age. Culture is defined as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all matters which most concern us, the best that has been thought and said; and through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically." It will be seen that there is little difference between this definition and that of criticism given in *Essays in Criticism* (first series, 1865). Culture and criticism being so closely related, the importance of literature as a cultural agency is quite apparent. The results of the pursuit of the best knowledge in the world and of propagating it are "Sweetness and Light"—words borrowed from Swift's *Battle of the Books*.

There are three classes in British society: the aristocracy or the Barbarians, the middle-class or the Philistines and the working class

or the Populace. The Barbarians are materialised, the Philistines are vulgarised, and the Populace are brutalised. Broadly speaking, none of these classes has sweetness and light. The Barbarians, however, have some image or shadow of sweetness manifested in their superficial gifts and graces—their politeness and good manners; but they have no light—knowledge and ideas. The Philistines have neither sweetness nor light.

Of these three classes the Philistines were the most important. They were the backbone of the society, and since power was passing from the aristocracy to them, they would become more influential. The future lay with them and hence to reform them was the great need of the time. They had many virtues. Their religion was a precious heritage from the Hebrews. It insisted on right conduct and conduct is three-fourths of life. So far so good. But their Hebraism was too strict and needed to be counter-balanced, liberalised, by Hellenism, the Greek thirst for knowledge, ideas, and beauty—for sweetness and light. Only thus could the harmonious perfection of man, which culture aims at, be achieved.

Arnold's concern with politics was indirect. It was due to his concern for the future of civilization in his country. Like Carlyle, Ruskin, and other sensitive men, he was shocked by the spectacle of squalor, misery and poverty side by side with great wealth. He hated the *laissez faire* economics and blamed the cruelty and misery suffered by the poor on the smugness of liberal politicians. He quotes the motto of the newspaper of the Dissenters, *The Nonconformist*: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion". "There", he comments with biting sarcasm, "is sweetness and light and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection!" One could quote other passages from *Culture and Anarchy* and his other speeches and writings to demonstrate his scorn of the Philistines. Like Carlyle and Ruskin he scouted the notion that a nation's greatness is measured by its riches, industry and machinery. "Greatness is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest and admiration."

Like Carlyle and Ruskin, again, Arnold had no sympathy with the English passion for false ideas of liberty. The anarchical conditions in the England of his time, he regarded as the direct result of this excessive liberty, the freedom to do 'what one likes'. This, however, does not mean that Arnold envisaged the absolute state or dictatorship. He only meant a controlled democracy, a government with more central powers of regulating and controlling the social and economic affairs of the country, a government that would ensure that no party advances its own separate interests at the cost of the community as a whole. The State was to reflect collectively the harmonious or integrated personality of the individual. It was in pursuance of this view that his propaganda for culture included a system of national education, especially secondary education.

In *Friendship's Garland* (1871) he continued his attacks on the

politicians with greater vigour. He invents a peevish German scholar, Arminius Von Thunderten Tronckh, who rebukes the English philistines. The attacks are ingenious, full of good-humoured fun and banter. Arnold, however, found them too flippant for his taste and did not permit their reprinting.

Discourses in America (1885) are lectures Arnold delivered in America during his visit in 1883-84. They are three: an appreciation of Emerson; a plea for Greek and Latin in education, and one entitled 'Numbers' in which he advances the thesis that the salvation of society in every country depends on its enlightened minority, that in countries of small population this minority is powerless, but that in America with its large 'numbers' one may well hope that this minority may prevail against the Philistine majority.

Mixed Essays (1879). This is a mixed bag—part literary, part political.

Religious Criticism. The best of Arnold's criticism of religion is to be found in *Literature and Dogma* (1873) and *God and the Bible* (1876). Culture being harmonious perfection of all the natural faculties of man includes knowledge as well as passion for doing good—Hellenism as well as Hebraism. Arnold, though not an orthodox Christian, valued the Church of England as an organisation for promoting good-doing. Being a religious man at heart, he wanted to free Christianity from the myths and dogmas with which it had become encrusted in course of time, and bring it in line with science and liberal thought. He defines religion as "morality touched by emotion" and God as "that stream of tendency. . . not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." After Darwin's evolution theory, the Bible had ceased to be looked upon as history or science or an infallible book of ethics. Nevertheless, it was great poetry, and as all great poetry has spiritual power and significance, the Bible should be read as literature and judged by ordinary standards. Arnold's was a sincere and earnest attempt to liberalise Christianity, but few of the faith have enthused over his diluted version of it.

As a critic, Arnold has virtues as well as faults. Though both have been noticed above in their proper contexts it would not be amiss to sum them up in a final round-up. First, his faults. His definition of poetry as "a criticism of life" is too restrictive in limiting it to the moral or didactic kind. Poetry is so many things that it is unwise, if not futile, to cage it in any narrow formula. His excessive admiration of the Greeks and all the corollaries following from it, viz. the principle of unity in form and structure, rejection of 'purple patches', insistence on great actions as the only fit subjects for poetry, etc. not only err on the side of exaggeration but contradict his own practice as a poet. His crotchets like "the grand style" and "high seriousness" are vague and their bestowal on some and denial to other poets arbitrary. He belittles the 'historic' estimate to the great annoyance of conscientious and painstaking literary historians. Saintsbury rightly retorts that Arnold objected to the historic estimate because he was averse to the exacting and ungrateful task it entails.

Now to tabulate his virtues. Arnold was the very first critic to stress the importance of comparative study of different literatures and the first critic in England to undertake such a study (*Essays in Criticism*, First Series 1865). His definition of criticism is irreproachable, and his insistence that a critic should acquire more and ever more knowledge, that he should have at least one foreign literature besides his own, is equally unexceptionable. His relating literary criticism to culture in the widest sense has left a strong and lasting influence on later generations of critics. His plea for the humanities as against scientific and vocational courses in schools and colleges has had a salutary effect in checking the trend to dehumanisation of education. His propaganda for culture has secured to the critic his rightful place in society. Finally, his insistence on high standards in poetry and literature and so on culture—on manners and morals—cannot but be of the greatest importance for the future of civilization everywhere.

In striking a balance between Arnold's virtues and faults we find his virtues far outweigh his faults. Indeed, if we leave off quibbling, his precepts as well as his judgments, eccentric as they seem in isolation, are really not so eccentric after all if taken in the mass. In holding up the Greek ideals he was simply prompted by his desire for perfection in poetry. His heart was romantic as is attested by his poetry, but his head was classic. So he invoked the Greeks, the French, and "the indispensable eighteenth century" to moderate the excesses of the romantics. As to his 'grand style' and 'high seriousness' we know what he meant, though we may not agree with his awards. Even here the denial of regular grand style to Shakespeare is the only serious misjudgment. (Saintsbury's lecture on the subject before the English Association included in *English Critical Essays: 20th century*, in world's classics, is a perfect silencer to Arnold's erratic judgment.) In dismissing Dryden and Pope as "classics of our prose" he was obviously comparing them with the poets of the preceding and succeeding generations and found them less endowed with poetic fire—a judgment which is endorsed by modern criticism. His charge that the romantic critics—Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt—did not know enough can be dismissed with an indulgent smile.

In assessing Arnold's worth as a critic it is important to remember that it is not necessary that we should agree with all his critical pronouncements, theoretical or practical. Criticism, in the last analysis, is personal judgment. Making due allowance for the personal factor, we find in Arnold's criticism the sound instinct, the acute perceptiveness of a true connoisseur and lover of literature. He admired the clarity and sanity of French prose—qualities which are reflected in his own style, which has the additional distinction of that "sweetness and light" which it was his life-long business to preach. He never raises his voice and yet contrives, by apt phrase, allusion or quotation, to express scorn, irony, contempt, or stern disapproval. Even when burning with indignation he never forsakes the poise, the urbanity, the sweet reasonableness of a cultivated gentleman. He has nothing of the volcanic violence of Carlyle or the poetic

eloquence of Ruskin; he achieves his effects by cogent argument and quiet pleading. He remains the greatest literary critic of the Victorian era and one of the greatest in the history of English criticism, ranking with Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Eliot. Two extracts follow:

Oxford

No, we are all seekers still! seekers often make mistakes, and I wish mine to redound to my own discredit only, and not to touch Oxford. Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!

'There are our young barbarians all at play!' And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side? nearer perhaps, than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who has given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! what example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistine in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone, that bondage which Goethe, in those incomparable lines on the death of Schiller, makes it his friend's highest praise (and nobly did Schiller deserve the praise) to have left miles out of sight behind him;—the bondage of '*was uns als ein bandigt, DAS GEMEINE!*' She will forgive me, even if I have unwittingly drawn upon her a shot or two aimed at her unworthy son; for she is generous and the cause in which I fight is, after all, hers. Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?

(*Essays in Criticism: First Series*)

Milton

The verse of the poets of Greece and Rome no translation can adequately reproduce. Prose cannot have the power of verse; verse translation may give whatever of charm is in the soul and talent of the translator himself, but never the specific charm of the verse and poet translated. In our race are thousands of readers, presently there will be millions, who know not a word of Greek and Latin, and will never learn those languages. If this host of readers are ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients, but through the original poetry of Milton, who has the like power and charm, because he has the like great style.

Through Milton they may gain it, for, in conclusion, Milton is English; this master in the great style of the ancients is English. Virgil, whom Milton loved and honoured, has at the end of the *Aeneid* a noble passage, where Juno, seeing the defeat of Turnus and the Italians imminent, the victory of the Trojan invaders assured, entreats Jupiter that Italy may nevertheless survive and be herself still, may retain her own mind, manners, and language, and not adopt those of the conqueror.

'*Sit Latium, sint Albani per secula reges!*' Jupiter grants the prayer; he promises perpetuity and the future to Italy—Italy reinforced by whatever virtue the Trojan race has, but Italy, not Troy. This we may take as a sort of parable suiting ourselves. All the Anglo-Saxon contagion, all the flood of Anglo-Saxon commonness, beats vainly against the great style but cannot shake it, and has to accept its triumph. But it triumphs in Milton, in one of our own race, tongue, faith, and morals. Milton has made the great style no longer an exotic here; he has made it an inmate amongst us, a leaven, and a power. Nevertheless he, and his hearers on both sides of the Atlantic, are English, and will remain English.

'*Sermonen Ansonii patrium moresque tenebunt*'. The English race overspreads the world, and at the same time the ideal of an excellence the most high and the most rare abides a possession with it for ever.

(*Essays in Criticism: Second Series*)

Newman (1801-1890). Unable to resolve his religious doubt, Matthew Arnold took refuge in a new or modified humanism, combining the *spirit* of religion with intellectual culture. Newman resolved his doubt by taking the definitive step of embracing Roman Catholicism. Both rebelled against materialism, but from different points of view. Arnold opposed it because it was inimical to culture; Newman opposed it because it was inimical to religion and spiritual values.

John Henry Newman's father was a London banker of Dutch origin; his mother was from a French Protestant (Huguenot) family. After private schooling he went to Trinity College, Oxford, where he took a second class degree in 1820. His unusual ability was noticed and he was elected a Fellow of Oriel College in which capacity he led a scholarly life for twenty years. In 1824, he was ordained an Anglican priest and in 1828 was appointed Vicar of St. Mary's, the University church. From this pulpit he preached sermons whose eloquence heightened by the charm of his personality attracted wide notice.

He made a trip to the Mediterranean in 1832 and was profoundly influenced by the spirit and splendour of the Roman Church. Returning in 1833, he threw himself into the religious struggle of the Oxford Movement and soon became its unquestioned leader. His nine years' spiritual struggle reached a crucial stage in his Tract No. 90 in which he attempted to show that the Thirty nine articles of the Protestant Church supported Catholicism. This famous sermon was most obnoxious to Protestant sentiment and alarmed even his tractarian friends. Finding his position in the Anglican Church untenable, Newman resigned his living of St. Mary's in 1843 and two years later joined the Church of Rome. He was ordained in that church and served it as a priest during the rest of his life. The Pope made him a Cardinal in 1879. He did not neglect the practical side of religion and combined his preaching with humanitarian work among the poor.

Newman is famous as a prose-writer, but he was also a skilled writer of verse, exemplified in *The Dream of Gerontius* (showing the feelings of a dying man whose soul is leaving the body and entering upon a new and brighter life) and in many other poems and hymns including the well-known 'Lead, Kindly Light'.

Newman's tracts, sermons, and other theological writings which are voluminous do not concern us. The best of these perhaps are *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) and *The Grammar of Assent* (1870), and the curious can read them. More interesting than these, however, are his two religious novels, *Loss and Gain* and *Callista*. The theme of the first is conversion to Catholicism, and

the second is in his own words, "an attempt to express the feelings and mutual relations of Christians and heathens in the middle of the third century."

The heroine Callista is a beautiful Greek sculptor who becomes a Christian convert and is martyred. The novel recalls Kingsley's *Hypatia*. These are slight things however, and Newman belongs to literature by virtue of his *Idea of a University* (1852) and *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864). *The Idea of a University* consists of lectures delivered by Newman as Rector of the Catholic University in Dublin. The *Apologia* is Newman's spiritual autobiography written in reply to Kingsley's charge of dishonesty against the Church of Rome and against Newman himself. He vindicates himself by tracing the entire course of his spiritual evolution, and one feels after reading the book that Kingsley's charge was nonsense. The book has a stamp of truth impressed upon it in words whose transparency mirrors the man behind them—pure, modest, gentle and conciliatory. The classical simplicity and clarity of Newman's prose is nowhere more impressive than in this record of his soul.

The Idea of a University is a plea for liberal education as the true object of a University. Liberal education consists in intellectual culture, "perfection of the intellect." This culture of the mind is valuable in itself for its own sake, quite independent of any other human end or purpose. It is distinguished from scientific and vocational training, from what are called the useful arts. Its aim is to make a gentleman, not a Christian, though a Christian would be so much the better if he was a gentleman also. It is desirable to have a cultivated mind, fine taste, noble bearing and polished manners. Newman makes a further distinction between mere learning and intellectual perfection. Intellectual perfection is enlargement of the mind "which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence." This, of course, does not mean that culture—a secular ideal—is a substitute for 'revelation', for the spirit of religion; it only means that it is something that could enrich the Christian, enable him to live a fuller and more satisfying life.

Nothing could better attest the breadth of Newman's mind than this view of University education. Here he comes closest to Matthew Arnold. And yet there was nothing common between the two in religious matters. Arnold was for liberalising religion; Newman for making it more orthodox. He rejected liberalism as the great enemy of Catholic truth. From one point of view the Oxford Movement was only an offshoot of the Romantic Movement of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Suspicion of reason lay at the root of both. A belief in God is based on intuition and imagination, which are also the sources that inspired the romantic poets. This also explains why the Romantic poets, the Oxford revivalists and later the pre-Raphaelites, turned back to the Middle Ages.

The Oxford Movement came to an end after Newman's conver-

sion. Those who followed him were mostly poets—Patmore, Hopkins, Francis Thompson, Mrs. Meynell—and Cardinal Manning.

Like Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, Newman was a preacher and rhetorician who had a message to deliver. But whatever be the beauty of his language or the music and harmony of his rhetorical periods, the principal charm of his style is its unaffected simplicity. He was never seduced by the praise of literary excellence. In a letter to a friend he says, "I have never written for writing sake, but my one and single aim has been to do what is so difficult, viz. to express clearly and exactly my meaning." His simplicity, however, though unaffected is never unstudied. To quote from the same letter again: "I have been obliged to take great pains with everything I have written, and I often write chapters over and over again, besides innumerable corrections and interlinear additions. I am not stating this as a merit, only that some persons write their best first, and I very seldom do." He acknowledges Cicero as his only master of style.

In the simplicity and clarity of his prose Newman belongs to the classical tradition of the 18th century. The *Apologia* and *The Idea of a University* are classics, but they are not popular. Newman is only for a few. Popularity is not always a mark of excellence. In the opinion of impartial critics, Newman is one of the greatest masters of English prose.

Macaulay (1800-59) is the most thorough and the most brilliant representative of the early Victorians. He believed in industrial revolution, *laissez faire* economics, parliamentary reforms, continued material prosperity and progress. He was continually arguing that the English people had never had it so good as in his own times. It was precisely this attitude of philistine complacency that was attacked by Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and Newman. Though essentially a Philistine, Macaulay was a man of brilliant gifts. As his philosophy was shared by the vast majority of his countrymen, it's no wonder that he was the most widely read and the most popular author of his generation outside the novelists. This reputation and this popularity he retained until the early years of the present century, when he suffered an almost total eclipse in the general revulsion of feeling against Victorianism.

Thomas Babington Macaulay—later Lord Macaulay—was the eldest child of Zachary Macaulay, a wealthy merchant very zealous in the anti-slavery cause. After attending a private school he went to Trinity College, Cambridge where he took an ordinary degree because of his abhorrence of mathematics. He won two prizes for verse, however, and was elected a Fellow of his College. Born to riches, he found himself suddenly poor due to failure of his father's business. He was called to the Bar, and after a couple of years got a minor Government post. To supplement his income he contributed articles to magazines. His famous *Essay on Milton* (1825) in the *Edinburgh Review* attracted the Whig party and he entered Parliament in 1830. He championed the Reform Bill and was rewarded

with a seat on the Board of Control. A more lucrative reward came to him when he was appointed (1834) Law member of the Viceroy's Council in India. During his five years he drafted the Indian Penal Code and organised Indian education—achievements which have left a permanent mark on Indian society. After his return to England in 1839 he entered politics again, was M.P. for Edinburgh and served in Whig ministries as Secretary for War and Paymaster General. In 1857, he was raised to the peerage as Lord Macaulay of Rothwell.

Macaulay was poet, essayist, and historian. His fame as a man of letters rests on *Lays of Ancient Rome* (already noticed), critical and historical *Essays*, and his *History of England*. The essays were contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* over a period of twenty years from 1825 to 1845. Beginning with 'Milton' the collection includes, among others, essays on such literary figures as Bacon, Bunyan, Addison, Goldsmith, Johnson, Byron and Leigh Hunt, and on such historical or political figures as Machiavelli, Mirabeau, Lord Clive, Chatham, William Pitt, Warren Hastings and Frederic the Great.

The typical Macaulay essay is a dissertation or long discourse in which the subject is treated against its historical background. Milton, for example, is viewed in the perspective of the political and religious conditions of his time. The maturer Macaulay did not approve of this essay, nor do we agree with all that is said in it; but the point is that it grips our attention from beginning to end by its brilliant and forceful style. Some of the essays are prejudiced and harsh—the most notable example of ferocious criticism is the essay on Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Others are marred by inaccuracies, such as those on Bacon and Hastings; but they are never dull. Quite apart from their interesting and compelling style, the essays are a mine of historical and literary information for young students. To underrate them, as some do, on the ground that they lack philosophy or profundity, is negative criticism.

Brilliant and eminently readable as the *Essays* are Macaulay's masterpiece is his *History of England*. One of the most important contributions to English historical literature, it ranks not far below Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. It is planned on a vast scale and was originally intended to cover the period from the accession of James II in 1685 to the end of George IV's reign in 1830. As it is, however, it is unfinished and its five volumes (1848-61) only cover the reigns of James II and William III, i.e. a period of 16 years from 1685 to 1702. Four of the volumes appeared in his life time, and the fifth was posthumous, edited by his sister Lady Trevelyan.

This *History* is essentially a panoramic view of English life and society at the end of the 17th century. The very vastness of its scale explains the elaboration of details in its colourful and variegated pictures of scenes and personalities. To form a just estimate we must remember that Macaulay's conception of history was romantic. "I shall not be satisfied," he says, "unless I produce some-

thing which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies." (Quoted by Richard Lodge in *Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, Vol. III). This disposes of the charge of inaccuracy so often made against Macaulay. A quest for the picturesque implies some sacrifice of accuracy. The same motive would seem to account for his excesses of emphasis and caricature, for sweeping generalisations and simplifications, for dividing people into black and white. However that may be, Macaulay's *History* does rival a Scott novel in its absorbing interest.

The charge of bias against Macaulay is meaningless, for there is no history without bias. The anti-Christian bias of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* is well-known. Macaulay wrote his history from the Whig point of view. He sees in the Civil War and in the Revolution of 1688 the operation and triumph of conservative Whig principles—principles opposed alike to absolutism and republicanism.

Macaulay's prose is essentially oratorical. It is brilliant, forceful, and above all, absolutely clear. It is so clear because he has no doubt about the correctness of his principles—he is 'cocksure'. For the rest, it is, in the main, eighteenth century prose, decked out with the usual balance, antithesis and symmetry. It is a complete contrast to Carlyle's vague, obscure and eccentric style.

Macaulay, for all his qualities, has received more brickbats than bouquets. If he was a Philistine he was a brilliant one who almost redeemed his philistinism by knowledge which few of his uncharitable critics could claim. Profundity is not the only quality desiderated in a writer. Macaulay's brilliance is dismissed as mere glitter, his eloquence as mere rhetoric, his short crisp sentences as 'snip-snap' (an echo of Brougham's jealous sneer). The truth of the matter seems to be that Macaulay has the defects of his virtues. He was a voracious reader gifted with a phenomenal memory and had amassed such a mass of learning and was so busy pouring it out that he had no time or patience to sift it, to organise it, to crystallise it into 'philosophy'. Besides, he was a practical man of affairs, not a dreamer or philosopher. He had no patience with supernaturalism, transcendentalism or any abstract thought whatever. Judged by this standard he is sound enough in his matter and not a little excellent in his expression. His one serious fault is that he hastily condemns things which he does not care to understand. We all know how contemptuously he dismissed all oriental literature as worthless in comparison to a shelf-full of English books.

Curiously enough this attitude of his has redounded to great benefit for India. It determined his choice of the English system of education for this country in preference to the oriental. The system survives in spite of the frequent attacks made upon it by unthinking politicians. Whatever may have been Macaulay's motives, the immense benefits that have accrued to this country from English education—not the least being her Independence—should make us

remember him with gratitude. He builded better than he knew. In the words of England's greatest writer: "Our thoughts are ours; their ends none of our own."

William Morris (1834-96). Of the four teachers and prophets—Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman and Arnold—who raised their voice against the complacent materialism of the Victorian Society only Ruskin had offered a practical programme of reform. Though he was ridiculed at the time, it was his ideas that have since exercised the greatest influence in the spheres of art and economics. In the later Victorian years his gospel of joy in work was carried forward by William Morris. Morris hated industrialism and all its works as heartily as Ruskin, but he went further than Ruskin in concluding that a radical reorganisation of society was the only remedy for the prevailing conditions. Since industrialism was rooted in individualism and private property, the latter must be replaced by collective effort and collective ownership; in short, by socialism. With this conviction Morris became an active propagandist for socialism. He delivered lectures, wrote essays. Of his socialist writings the best known are *News from Nowhere* (1891) and *A Dream of John Ball* (1888). The first pictures a socialist Utopia in which England of the 21st century would be a country of small towns, white and clean, devoid of railways, factories and machines, where Nature would enliven the landscape, where handicrafts would be restored to their rightful place in the national economy, where there would be no private property, where work would be a joy, where everybody would be simple, beautiful and happy. In *A Dream of John Ball* he goes to the Middle Ages, to the Peasant's Revolt of 1381. Its language is archaic but not unpleasing. In his lectures, as in his essays, Morris's style is simple, straightforward and urgent. The socio-political doctrines of Morris had marked influence on the later generations; it is quite apparent in Shaw and Wells.

Two other writers of the later Victorian era, besides Morris, who were influenced by Ruskin's art theories were Walter Pater (1839-94) and John Addington Symonds (1840-93). Unlike Ruskin and Morris, however, they were content to enjoy the aesthetic pleasure of art rather than bring it to the service of society. Pater, who passed his whole life as a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, is known as the expounder of the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' and of the hedonistic doctrine of enjoying the most refined pleasure as the one end of existence. Pater's own idea of the most exquisite pleasure was that derived from art or contemplation of the past. It was, however, literally interpreted by his followers notably Oscar Wilde, who as a result came to grief. Pater's hedonism and his carefully wrought style are best seen in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873), *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) and *Appreciations* (1889). His other works are *Imaginary Portraits* (1887) and *Plato and Platonism* (1893).

The *Studies* include such famous artists as Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli and Michelangelo, and the conclusion is that love of art

for art's sake is the highest wisdom.

Marius the Epicurean is a novel of the second century Rome. Marius, a young Roman noble and a friend of Marcus Aurelius, is profoundly impressed by Christianity and dies a martyr, sacrificing his life to save that of a Christian friend. His martyrdom, however, brings him no joy, since his philosophy provided him with no key to the mystery of life. The epicureanism of Marius is not that of a Roman but of Pater and his Oxford's—a non-Christian mixture of culture, beauty and seeming spirituality.

Appreciations is a smallish book containing an essay on 'Style' followed by critical essays on Lamb, Wordsworth, Sir Thomas Browne, Shakespeare and other English writers. In the essay on style, he defines art as the expression, not of the truth of fact but of the truth of the artist's impression of the fact—perfect correspondence of word to the artist's experience. This doctrine of the one word which alone corresponds to the artist's impression he borrowed from the contemporary French novelist Flaubert noted for his highly finished style. Though Pater's style is highly polished and can express delicate shades of meaning, it is over-elaborate, slow, and a little effeminate. If every writer were to pass restless days and sleepless nights in search of the one precious word or phrase that alone could express his meaning, there would be very little writing in the world.

Symonds of the same aesthetic school is less distinguished. He was a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, suffered from consumption and died in Rome. His chief work is *History of the Renaissance in Italy* (1875-86) which suffers from the twin defects of verbosity and extremely ornate style.

Oscar Wilde has already been discussed in connection with his poetry. He represents the nonserious aspect of the aesthetic movement as Pater represents its serious aspect.

Another minor figure of the aesthetic movement and contemporary with Pater was Arthur Symonds (1865-1945). He was poet, and critic of all forms of art. His importance is due to his book *The Symbolic Movement in Literature* (1899). He was an exponent of the French symbolists, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Baudelaire, etc. who revolutionised English poetry in the 20th century. Symonds's prose is patterned on Pater's and his verse on that of Baudelaire who celebrated 'sin' but who was idolised by Eliot as a Catholic moralist. The aesthetic movement hardly survived the century though Symonds continued a loyal adherent of a lost cause to the end.

The aesthetic brotherhood has been aptly described as "the tragic generation." One went to jail, another died young, still another committed suicide and Symonds, its last flag-bearer, became mad in his later years. Yeats alone, an early member of the Rhymers' Club, escaped with his wits, though he did not abandon its principles.

Critics and Essayists

Of the major critics and essayists of the Victorian period we have

discussed Macaulay and Arnold. (Carlyle and Ruskin also essayed literary criticism but it was incidental.) After Arnold the most notable critics were J.A. Froude, Walter Bagehot, Sir Leslie Stephen and Theodore Watts Dunton.

Anthony James Froude (1818-94) was a historian as well as a distinguished man of letters. He contributed excellent critical essays to magazines which were collected as *Short Studies in Great Subjects* (1867-82).

Walter Bagehot (1826-77) was an economist, but is remembered today by his criticisms published posthumously in *Literary Studies* and *Biographical Studies*. He had no consistent critical creed, but this is made up, to a large extent, by the lightness of his touch, brilliant wit and humour.

Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), famous as editor of the monumental *Dictionary of National Biography*, was essentially a biographer. The biographies of Pope, Swift, Johnson, Hobbes and George Eliot in the *English Men of Letters* are by him. His purely critical works are *Hours in a Library*, collection of essays contributed to periodicals (1874-79), *History of English Thought in the 18th Century* (1876) and *English Literature and Society in the 18th Century* (1904). Athlete, mountaineer, and freethinker, Stephen had affinities with the 18th century. As essayist and critic he was a cold and detached highbrow. He held the view "that the value of second-rate literature is not small, but simply zero."

Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914) who befriended Swinburne in his old age is remembered chiefly for his article "Poetry and the Renaissance of Wonder" in *Chambers's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*. His novel *Aylwin* (1898) shows his interest in gipsies. He knew Borrow and edited his *Lavengro*.

If we were to subscribe to Sir Leslie Stephen's dictum about second-rate literature, we should stop here; but since we do not, we append below a list of critics and essayists who may or may not be absolutely of the first class (for tastes differ), but who have no mean merit, who have been popular in the past and who can still be read with pleasure and profit.

The first two are Scottish: Doctor John Brown (1810-82) and Samuel Smiles (1812-1904). Dr. Brown is remembered for the essays collected under the title of *Horae Subscivae* and the story of the dog Rab in *Rab and His Friends*. Samuel Smiles' character-building books *Self-Help* (1859), *Character* (1871) *Thrift* (1875), and *Duty* (1880) are of the same class as Cobbet's *Advice to Young Men* and were immensely popular until the twenties of the present century. Their recent revival in India is a good augury for our young men.

Stopford Brooke (1832-1916) is remembered specially by his *Primer of English Literature* which compresses so much within the covers of a booklet.

Henry Austin Dobson (1840-1921), whose verse has been noticed,

had wide knowledge of the 18th century. He wrote sketches of Hogarth, Steele, Goldsmith and Horace Walpole, but is better remembered for his three series of *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*.

We may now notice three politicians who had a flair for literature.

Viscount Morley (1838-1923) was Secretary of State for India (1905-10) and is remembered in this country for Morley-Minto Reforms. He was a historical and political essayist and publicist and wrote sketches and studies of Burke, Gladstone, Rousseau, Voltaire and others. He was also the editor of the first series of the *English Men of Letters*. His essay *On Compromise* (1874) is the most popular of his works.

Archibald Philip Primrose, Earl of Rosebery (1847-1929), twice Foreign Secretary and for a short while Prime Minister was a noted orator. He is best known for his *Pitt*, for sometime a textbook in Indian Universities.

Augustine Birrel (1850-1933) found time from his political preoccupations to make small contributions to literature of which the best known are his *Obiter Dicta* in three series of which the last (1924) belongs to the present century. His essays are slight in substance but have the charm of an interesting personality—sincere, learned, witty, humorous and a trifle mischievous. His singularly engaging style has come to be called 'birrelling'.

Richard Jefferies (1848-87), the famous naturalist, ranks with White of Seiborne noticed in an earlier book and W.H. Hudson to be noticed with 20th century writers. A vein of poetry and philosophy runs through all his nature writings such as *A Gamekeeper at Home* (1878), *Wild Life in a Southern County* (1879) and *Wood Magic* (1881). Not the least of his works is the charming spiritual autobiography, *The Story of My Heart* (1883).

Biography, Memoirs, Autobiography

Biographies and memoirs produced in the nineteenth century are so numerous that only a very strict selection can preserve the perspective. If we keep Boswell's *Johnson* in mind as an ideal, not more than half a dozen deserve inclusion in our brief survey.

The best biography of the early 19th century is Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott* (1829) which has now been supplemented by Grierson's *Sir Walter Scott* (1938). Though Byron's own memoirs were destroyed, Thomas Moore's life of the poet appended to his *Letters and Journals* (1830) is still the only reliable work on the subject. *Thomas Arnold* (1844) by Arthur P. Stanley, a former pupil of the great head master of Rugby, is a typical example of Victorian biography in its attitude of pious reverence for its subject. Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857) has from the first taken high rank among English biographies for the great insight and sympathetic understanding displayed by the author. In spite of the almost definitive biography of Dickens by Edgar Johnson (1953),

Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens* (1874) is a classic and can never be displaced.

David Masson's monumental *Life of Milton* (1859-80) in six volumes is both exhaustive and exhausting. Few will read all the volumes, but they are invaluable for reference.

Incidental reference to the autobiographies of this period has been made in the course of our survey. They may, however, be grouped here for ready reference. Arranged chronologically they are: Newman's *Apologia* (1864), John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography* (1873), Trollope's *Autobiography* (1883), Jefferies's *The Story of My Heart* (1883), Ruskin's *Praeterita* (1885-89) and Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903).

CHAPTER 43

MISCELLANEOUS PROSE WRITERS

Historians—Philosophers—Scientists—Theologians.

In this brief chapter we propose to deal with those prose writers who, though they were not directly concerned with literature, nevertheless had their own contributions to make to the intellectual ferment whose various manifestations in the life and literature of the period we have so far been studying. These were the historians, philosophers, scientists and theologians. Though their interests were specialised, some of them were distinguished by an excellent prose style.

Historians

The 19th century is extraordinarily rich in historical studies. It must be remembered, however, that new evidence is continually cropping up which is apt to modify, if not disturb entirely, the conclusions of historians long regarded as authorities on their subjects. Archaeology in the 20th century has thrown new light on ancient history as well as on early English history, so that even Freeman and Stubbs, noted authorities on early English periods, have to some extent become antiquated.

Of the historians before Macaulay the most notable name is that of Henry Hallam (1777-1859) whose *A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818), and *The Constitutional History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II* (1827) were long regarded as standard works on their respective subjects. Macaulay, as we have seen, scored a reputation second only to Gibbon's by following the example of Scott's novels, by imaginative and dramatic presentation of the past; in short by romanticizing history. The lesson of Macaulay's success was not lost upon his successors and at least two of them, Froude and Green, followed in his footsteps.

Anthony James Froude (1818-94), like his master Carlyle, was a historian by accident. They were essentially men of letters, but to

them history offered a more suitable vehicle for the expression of their views. Froude was a high Tory and he expresses his Toryism by making a Carlylean 'hero' of that much-married monarch, Henry VIII, in his *History of England from the Fall of Cardinal Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada* (1856). The book was a sensation which it was intended to be. It is highly controversial, is full of inaccuracies, but it is high drama, couched in a wonderful style—swift, clear and elegant.

The same picturesque style marks John Richard Green's *Social History of the English People* (1874)—the most popular history of England outside Macaulay's. Its special merits are: first, that it deals with the social and economic life of the people rather than with kings and queens; second, that it covers the entire field of English history upto his time, whereas other histories including Macaulay's are limited to special periods; and third and not the least, that like Macaulay's and unlike Froude's it is scrupulously accurate in facts despite their striking and dramatic presentation.

After these three historians of the romantic school we may briefly notice a group of historians whose work is distinguished by an outlook which is chiefly, if not wholly, scientific. These are E.A. Freeman (1823-92), Bishop Stubbs (1825-1901), S.R. Gardiner (1829-1902), Sir William Napier (1785-1860) and A.W. Kinglake (1809-91).

Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest* (1867-76) is remarkable for its emphasis on the Germanic element in the English character. As passionately patriotic and polemical as Froude, Freeman has the great merit of accuracy, but little of style. His history of the conquest is generally accepted as a standard work on that event. Bishop Stubbs who was a close associate of Freeman and who shared his Germanist views is known principally for his *Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development* (1874-78). Gardiner is accepted as an authority on the Stuart Period which he covered in his monumental works: *The History of England from 1603 to 1640* (in ten volumes), *The History of the Great Civil War* and *The History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate* (all between 1883 to 1901). Sir William Napier's *History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France from the year 1807 to the year 1814* (1828-40) in six volumes is a stirring first-hand narrative of that campaign written in the vigorous prose of a soldier. Kinglake better known for his delightful *Eothen* wrote *The History of the War in Crimea* (1863-87) which despite its brilliant style has never been very popular.

The remaining historians of the period may be considered as belonging to a loosely-called philosophic group. They are Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-62), Sir Henry Maine (1822-88), Sir John Seeley (1834-95), W.E. Hartpole Lecky (1838-1903), James, Viscount Bryce (1838-1922), and F.E. Maitland (1850-1906).

Buckle died too young to complete his projected *History of Civil-*

zation in Europe. The two volumes (1857-61) that appeared deal only with England. Scotland, France and Spain were added later. His history is philosophic in the sense that it is based on the theory that a nation's history is determined by its environment. The historian discovers general laws of growth and development and fits the facts to his theory. This results in fallacious generalisations. Buckle was influenced by French Positivism and his prejudice against supernaturalism leads him astray. The style is clear and forceful.

Sir Henry Maine who was for sometime law member of the Viceroy's Council in India and later in the India Council is best known for his *Ancient Law* (1861), his masterpiece, and *Village Communities in the East and West* (1871).

Seeley was an imperialist and is known for his *Expansion of England* (1883) written with the 'practical object' of holding up imperialism as the ideal of British government.

Lecky, a rationalist influenced by Buckle, is remembered chiefly by his uncontroversial *History of England in the 18th Century* (1878-90).

Bryce, who was ambassador to the United States wrote, among other things, *The Holy Roman Empire* (1864) and *The American Commonwealth* (1888) both of which are classics. A revised edition of the latter appeared in 1920.

Maitland was Downing Professor of Law at Cambridge and wrote many books on legal subjects, the best being the *History of English Law before the Time of Edward I* (1895).

Philosophers

The most important event in 'pure' philosophy of the 19th century was the introduction to England of Kant and Hegel, first by Coleridge and then by such famous metaphysicians as Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) in the earlier years and by T.H. Green (1836-82) and F.H. Bradley (1846-1924) in the later. The material philosophy of Locke and Hume continued to dominate English thought through the greater part of the century and was the basis of its ruling doctrine of utilitarianism. It was not until Green in the 80s made a passionate appeal for the study of Kant and Hegel that German idealism made its impact on English thought. This struck a blow at the individualism of the utilitarians and replaced it, however gradually, by socialism. Green's greatest book is *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883).

Utilitarianism, the 'applied' philosophy which determined the political economy of the Victorian age, has been considered at some length in the introductory section. Its central figure, John Stuart Mill, however, needs a little further elucidation. The popular conception that he was like his father a mere logic-chopper is erroneous. Mill like Lamb was a clerk at the India House, but his real vocation was philosophy. His father's system of education had starved him

of feelings and imagination. He felt frustrated and restless. This restlessness was to some extent appeased by his turning to Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle. In Wordsworth he found an inner joy. He remained a rationalist and utilitarian to the last, but his friends, including Carlyle, were struck by something like 'mysticism' in their attitude and temper. He moderated the harshness of *laissez-faire* and became more sympathetic to religion. In fact, his *Three Essays on Religion* (1874), which appeared after his death, show that his agnosticism had yielded place to something like theism. Mill's most important contribution to ethics is *Utilitarianism* (1863). He shows himself master of a practical prose-style perfectly adapted to popular exposition of philosophy.

In the later part of the century the leading philosopher was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). He accepted Darwin's theory and attempted a synthesis of philosophy by coordinating the conclusions drawn from all sciences. Leaving aside his works on biology, psychology, sociology, etc., we may mention his small and more readable works such as *Education* (1861) and *The Data of Ethics* (1879). Like Ruskin and Arnold, he was a passionate advocate of education as essential to complete and harmonious living.

To complete the philosophical picture, a brief reference may be made to positivism. Positivist philosophy was founded by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857). It is only another variety of Humanism which believes only in observed phenomena and excludes revealed religion and metaphysics or inquiry into the nature of reality. For religion it substitutes social ethics. The Positivists believe in a First Cause, but not in the God of popular theology. Miss Harriet Martineau (1802-76) was probably the first writer to introduce Comte's philosophy to England in her *Positive Philosophy* (2 Vols., 1853). Comte's principal English disciple was Frederic Harrison (1831-1923). Among other positivists were John Stuart Mill, G.H. Lewes, George Eliot, Buckle and Lecky. Positivism, however, was never a strong influence on English philosophical thought.

Scientists

Reference has already been made in the introductory section to Lyell's *Geology* and Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, which had such a devastating effect on religious faith. Darwin has little interest for the student of literature. His informal *Autobiography*, however, is a human document and is worth reading. In this he states with delightful frankness that he had lost whatever taste he earlier had for music, poetry, etc. and that he found even Shakespeare intolerable.

The only other eminent scientist of the century was the zoologist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-95). A disciple, interpreter and champion of Darwin, he was all his life engaged in the debate between science and religion. He combined science with humanistic interests and was master of a clear, precise and forceful prose.

In interpreting Darwin he argues that though we have descended from lowly forms of life, it does not argue that because our remote ancestor was a Dog or Tiger, we should howl or tear weaker creatures to pieces. "Is mother-love vile because a hen shows it, or fidelity base because dogs possess it?" On the other hand, thoughtful men will find in man's lowly origin "the best evidence of the splendour of his capacities, and will discern in his long progress through the past a reasonable ground of faith in his attainment of a nobler future." Further, he defines a liberally educated man as one whose passions are controlled "by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience, who has learned to love all beauty, whether of nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself."

It all boils down to this: Nature may be red in tooth and claw, but it does not follow that society is to be built on that basis. Man's ethical nature has resisted and triumphed over the cosmic process of evolution, over the law of survival of the fittest. Civilised men do not suffer the weaker to go to the wall, but do all in their power to protect and help them.

Theologians

In order to follow the movement of religious thought in the 19th century it is necessary to know a little about the divisions of the Church of England: High Church and Low Church. High Church sets great value on the authority of bishops and priests, believes in the inherent grace of sacraments and rituals; Low Church is the extreme wing of Protestantism approximating to non-conformism which gives low place to priesthood, sacraments and rituals.

At the centre of the religious upheaval was the Oxford Movement. Led by Keble, Pusey, and Newman the movement sprang essentially from the conditions that arose in England as a result of the demand of equal treatment by the non-conformists on the one hand and by the Roman Catholics on the other. In 1801, Ireland was united politically with England and the mainly Protestant English Parliament was made directly responsible for the predominantly Catholic Ireland. In 1828, the disabilities of the non-conformists were removed and a year later (1829) came the similar emancipation of Catholics. As a result of these two latter measures the established or recognised Anglican Church lost the advantages which it had enjoyed over the other Churches. In fact, the very real danger of being disestablished, that is, of being no longer supported by the State, had to be faced.

The immediate occasion for the Oxford Movement was the first Reformed Parliament's hostile attitude to the Church. Keble's sermon on 'National Apostasy' in 1833 raised the crucial issue. Whence did the Church derive its authority? The Church of England, the leaders urged, did not derive its authority from the State but from God. This meant that the Anglican Church was truly "Catholic" in the sense of being universal and not national. The emphasis shifted from temporal authority of the Crown to spiritual authority of God. In

this shift of values, establishment or disestablishment lost its importance.

The whole question was debated in the "tracts for the times" and was ultimately answered by Newman's going over to the Church of Rome, that home of traditionalism. Keble, Pussey and others, though they did not follow Newman, tended to bring the Anglican Churches in line with the Catholic by returning to traditional forms and ritual. It was because of this return to traditional forms and rituals that the Anglican Church was for a time known as the High Church and even as the Anglo-Catholic Church.

By the end of the century the sharp divisions between the churches had died out, all sinking minor differences and uniting in all kinds of humanitarian effort for social uplift. Religion was not dead; it had become more enlightened. The unbelievers became frankly atheists or agnostics. England was moving into the 20th century.

The theological controversy of the period produced only three men of letters: Newman, Pattison and A.J. Froude. After the conversion of Newman, Pattison and Froude who had come under his spell for a time reacted strongly against the Oxford Movement. Pattison became a prominent 'liberal' and Froude took a new master—Carlyle.

The Victorian Era: A Summing Up

In retrospect the Victorian era shows three more or less sharply defined stages. The early Victorian society based on the industrial revolution, Ricardo's political economy, and Benthamite's Utilitarianism, was one of uneasiness and turmoil. It somehow tided over the famines of the 'hungry forties' and the Chartist menace of 1848. In the second stage the Victorians entered upon a period of unprecedented prosperity, profound optimism, confidence and complacency. Mr. Roebuck satirised into fame by Arnold echoed the general sentiment: "I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last." This happiness did not last. Near about 1880 began the third stage. Optimism and confidence waned; doubt and disillusion crept in. Some indeed found comfort in the imperialist songs of Kipling, but the Imperialist phase was a short one, and in any case could not hide the doubt and anxiety following upon the trade depression of the late seventies and eighties, the rise of the proletariat and the emergence of socialism as an active force. The great prosperous Victorian Age—the period of 50s, 60s and 70s—had ended. After 1880 arose a new spirit of discontent and revolt and the 80s and 90s ('naughty nineties') were marked by a strong reaction against the middle class or *bourgeois* values of faith, piety, prudery and respectability. Thus, what is usually called Victorianism came to an end long before the death of Queen Victoria.

This reaction is reflected in the literature of the period especially that of the Aesthetic School led by Pater and Oscar Wilde. These

writers of *fin de siècle* or end of the century show a marked decline of creative power and a foppish concern for form, 'precious' word, style, etc. qualities characteristic of 'decadence'. Outside the decadents, the falling off of creative vitality is quite apparent as we pass from Dickens to the technically accomplished Hardy. The pessimistic note in the literature of the period is equally significant, as for example in the novels of Hardy and Gissing. Butler's cynical and irreverent mockery of family life and tradition, morality and religion was another sign of the times. In short, writers of 1880-1900 had struck a blow for freedom from Victorian conventions, for a movement which swelled into a literary revolution in the next century.

Such is the picture of the Victorian Age when examined in parts. What of the picture as a whole? We should not lose sight of the wood because of the trees. If we see the period steadily and see it whole, some of the broad statements we have made would need considerable qualification. It is customary to say that the Victorian Age was one of smug complacency. Yet, this is true only of its middle years. Again, the utterances of Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold denouncing the sins of the people have spread the notion that the Victorians were a heartless, selfish, money-grabbing lot. And yet they were not so black as they were painted. It is true they worshipped Mammon, but they also worshipped God. The puritan streak runs through all the political, social and religious conflicts of the period. Whiggism, Toryism, Utilitarianism, Rationalism, Agnosticism, Evangelicalism, Christian Socialism, Tractarianism—all these factions fought one another, but they also cooperated when occasion demanded. What brought them together was the strong sense of common humanity, of brotherhood, but for which no reform was possible. The watchword of the whole age was reform. And it is for its solid record of humanitarian, social and political reforms, no less than for its great achievements in literature and science, that the Victorian Age must be judged to be, on the whole, the most glorious in British history.

BOOK NINE

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Bird's Eyeview

We summed up the political and social history of the 19th century in two key-words: Democracy and Reform. The 20th century is merely an extension of these two principles. The two political parties that ruled Britain in the Victorian era have in the present century undergone a significant change. The Conservatives today are no longer drawn exclusively from the aristocracy as under Disraeli, but have a large admixture of the middle classes; while the Liberals have been almost completely ousted and their place has been taken by the Labour Party. Socialism, which in the later years of the 19th century was more or less theoretical, has now become the corner-stone of practical politics. The aim of either government in power is the same, viz. to achieve the 'Welfare State'—a state, that is to say, which ensures the well-being of every one of its citizens from the cradle to the grave. The only difference between them is in respect of the speed of reform. The Conservatives do not blindly oppose all measures of reform; only, they are for a 'go slow' policy. The Labour Party, on the other hand, stands for forcing the pace of socialism in order to achieve the ideal in the shortest possible time.

At the beginning of the present century Britain was undoubtedly the mightiest world power with a far-flung empire. As a result of the two world wars, however, and especially after the second, that empire is no more. Her supremacy has now passed to USA and Russia. Reduced to a second class power, Britain is at the moment trying to bolster up her position in the international sphere by seeking membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) or European Common Market, an economic organisation of the countries of Western Europe on the lines of their military organisation, called the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) established after the second world war as a collective defence system against Russia.

Detailed History

The death of Queen Victoria in January 1901 after a reign of sixty-four years marked the end of an epoch. She was succeeded by her son Edward VII. The end of the Boer War in 1902 was followed by a general election which returned the Conservatives with a substantial majority. Lord Salisbury, however, resigned, and his nephew Arthur James Balfour became Prime Minister. In the general election of 1906, the Conservatives were defeated and the Liberals came to power with a large majority. More significant for the future was the emergence of the Labour Party as a real political force with as many as 29 members. The election had been fought mainly on the issue of Free trade vs. Protective tariffs. The free traders won and Joseph Chamberlain, the fanatical champion of protection, received a blow from which he never recovered, and died in 1914. He had split the Conservative party and it was on this issue that Winston Churchill left the party and joined the Liberals in 1904.

The Conservatives, who had been in power for nearly two decades, had shown little enthusiasm for reforms. The Liberal Government first under Campbell Bannerman (resigned 1908) and then under Asquith (1908-14) were determined to push through their schemes of social welfare at all costs. In 1908, the first Old Age Pension Act was passed. This scheme cost money as did the strengthening of the navy which had to be undertaken in reply to the German rearmament. The radical Lloyd George who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Asquith Government, introduced his 'People's Budget' in April 1909. To raise the necessary funds he levied heavy taxes on the rich, his slogan being 'Make the Rich Pay'. The Commons passed the Budget by an overwhelming majority (9 April 1909), but the Lords rejected it by an even larger majority (30 November 1909). This head-on collision produced a constitutional crisis of the first magnitude.

Soon after, the House of Commons passed a resolution characterising the action of the Lords as 'a breach of the constitution'. The Parliament was dissolved and an election held (January 1910). The result was a slender liberal majority. It was only with the support of Labour Party (40) and the Irish Nationalists (82) that the Liberals could run the government. John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Nationalists, made the strength of his party a bargaining counter and extracted from the Liberals a promise to give Home Rule to Ireland in return for his support in the Commons in their dispute with the Lords.

A 'Parliament Bill' was now introduced (27 March 1910) in the House of Commons enacting that: (1) the House of Lords shall have no power to amend or reject money Bills, and (2) that other Bills passed by the House of Commons in three successive sessions and rejected each time by the House of Lords shall become law.

As a conference between the Liberal and Conservative leaders

failed to resolve the issue, George V who had succeeded Edward VII (6 May 1910) agreed, on the advice of Asquith, to create enough Liberal Peers to enable the Bill to pass through the House of Lords, provided that another general election on this issue clearly indicated the will of the people. The Parliament was accordingly dissolved (28 November 1910) and another election held (December 1910). Thus there were two general elections in 1910—one under Edward VII and the other under George V. The second election produced almost the same result as before.

The Bill was passed by the House of Commons (May 1911) and by the House of Lords (10 August 1911). The threat to swamp the House of Lords with Liberal Peers had worked. Thus democracy was saved by royal prerogative as it had been saved once before by William IV at the time of the First Reform Bill (1832).

The Parliament Act of 1911 is the most important piece of legislation in the constitutional history of Britain in the 20th century. It is a triumphant assertion of the supremacy of the Commons over the Lords, of the people over the Peers. From now on the House of Lords could not veto any Money Bill, and its veto on other Bills was limited to their suspension for two years.

The way was now open for the Liberals to embark upon their welfare programme unhampered by the restrictive powers of the House of Lords. The following reforms followed in quick succession: 8 hour day for the miners, trade boards for fixing minimum wages, labour exchanges, school meals for needy children, scholarships for bright students of primary schools passing to secondary schools, national insurance providing assistance to workers in sickness and disability, maternity benefits, etc.

The Liberals were also committed to Home Rule for Ireland and they redeemed their promise to Redmond by passing the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1912. Asquith's chief difficulty was the opposition of Northern Ireland (Ulster). Being protestant it would not merge in the southern Catholic Ireland. On the other hand, the Irish nationalists would not accept the exclusion of Ulster. Passions were roused on both sides and the dispute led to near rebellion. Asquith knew that Ulster could not be coerced to join the south, but he dare not say so openly for fear of losing the support of Redmond and his party in the Parliament. As was expected, the Bill was rejected by the House of Lords. This merely meant a delay of two years and the Bill automatically became law in 1914. Just then the war broke out and the Home Rule Act was suspended during the war.

In spite of the far-reaching measures of social benefit, it was a period of sharp conflict between Capital and Labour. Prices had risen but the wages remained stationary. Because of foreign competition, especially of Germany and USA, Britain had been steadily losing her industrial supremacy since the seventies of the 19th century. This was reflected in wide-spread unemployment. There were strikes by miners, railwaymen and factory workers. Employers

retaliated by lock-outs.

Besides this economic strife, there was the militant movement of Women's suffrage. The suffragettes indulged in violent demonstrations in their agitation to secure parliamentary vote. They achieved nothing at the time beyond making themselves a nuisance to both the Government and the public. It was only in 1918 that the vote was given to women of 30. In 1928, women were given the same voting rights as men.

Such were the political and social conditions in Britain when suddenly war broke out in August 1914. This common danger put an end to all strife uniting all people and parties in a stupendous national effort to win the war.

The Great War of 1914-18

The war though sudden was not unexpected. The German menace had been steadily growing since the accession to the throne of Kaiser William II (1888). He dismissed Bismarck and initiated an aggressive policy to make Germany a world power. By 1890, Germany had become a strong rival of the great imperial powers: Britain, Russia, Austria, France. She had made deep thrusts especially in Africa. The Kaiser began an ambitious programme of building a Navy to rival that of Britain. Germany had financial interests in Morocco, where French influence was dominant. On the pretext of protecting these, the Kaiser intervened twice in Morocco (1906, 1911) with the object of ousting France but failed because of the diplomatic support to France by Britain and Russia.

After the Boer War, Britain felt herself isolated in Europe. In order to feel secure it was necessary to make friends. Her relations with Russia and France were none too happy. In the 19th century she had always taken sides against Russia to protect her interests in the Mediterranean and Asia. The French too felt sore about their ouster by the British from Egypt and the Sudan.

In 1902, Britain entered into an alliance with Japan which was emerging as a great industrial power. The crushing defeat of Russia by Japan in 1905 confirmed the British view that Japan would be strong enough to protect her interests in that part of the world.

The arrogant and aggressive attitude of the Kaiser left no room for doubt about his intentions. The great powers were alarmed and formed the *Triple Entente* of Britain, France and Russia (1907) by which they resolved their outstanding differences and arrived at an amicable understanding. This *Triple Entente* was a counterblast to the *Triple Alliance* between Germany, Austria and Italy which had existed since 1882.

The Great War began in the Balkans. As a result of the two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913—the first against Turkey and the second among the Balkan states themselves over division of the territories won from Turkey—Serbia emerged the strongest. There

was a large population of Serbs and Croats in the territories controlled by Austria. Counting on the support of Russia, the greatest Slav country, Serbia stirred up the Serbians living under Austria. Austrians were in no mood to permit the break-up of their multi-racial empire. So there was a great tension between the two. On 28 June 1914, the Archduke Ferdinand, son of the Austrian emperor, was murdered by a Serbian student in Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia. Austria sent an ultimatum to Serbia making demands that no self-respecting country could accept. Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia ordered mobilisation and Germany declared war upon Russia. This was followed by German declaration of war on France. On 4 August, Germany invaded Belgium to force a passage to France. Belgium's neutrality had been guaranteed in 1839 by Germany, France and Britain, but Germany treated that guarantee as a scrap of paper. On that same day Britain declared war on Germany.

On the British side fought France, Russia, Italy (she broke the *Triple Alliance*), Japan, and much later (April 1917) USA. On the German side were Austria and Turkey. USA was drawn to the war by the indiscriminate sinking of her ships by German submarines.

Following the Bolshevik Revolution of 7 November 1917, Russia concluded a separate peace with Germany and Austria in December 1917 and signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (3 March 1918). It was a peace dictated by Germany as to a defeated nation. Russia gave up Poland and the Baltic provinces.

Germany and her allies were completely defeated. The Kaiser fled to neutral Holland, and Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918.

Britain During the War

War Front. Britain was reasonably well prepared for the war, but suffered heavy reverses in the earlier stages. Differences arose in the cabinet over what is known as the Gallipoli campaign. Some were in favour of opening an eastern front by forcing passage through the straits of Dardanelles and reaching supplies to Russia. This was opposed by Conservatives including Kitchener who was secretary for war. Because of these differences Asquith formed a coalition Government consisting of 12 Liberals, 8 Conservatives and one Labour (Henderson) on 26 May 1915. The Gallipoli campaign was a disastrous failure and the idea of an eastern front was abandoned.

1916 was also a bad year. Lord Kitchener, who was highly esteemed by the public, was drowned when the ship carrying him to visit the Russian fleet struck a mine (June 1916). The British suffered heavy losses on the Somme (river in N. France). For these and other mishaps, Asquith was widely criticised and after much discussion and political intrigue Lloyd George became Prime Minister and formed a new cabinet. It was his energy, initiative, and drive that won the war. A brilliant orator and firm administrator he was not afraid of introducing such unpopular measures as conscription, price control and rationing. A radical reformer, he gave vote to all men

of 21 and recognised women's war time services by giving the vote to those women of 30 who were electors in local Municipal Boards or wives of such electors. He was quick to cash in on his popularity by holding the 'Khaki Election' of 1918 before it vanished in the inevitable post-war reaction.

The Treaty of Versailles (1919)

Two months after the armistice the Peace Conference opened at Versailles against the appalling background of havoc and ruin wrought in Europe by the most terrible war that the world had known. The peace terms were formulated by Lloyd George (England), Woodrow Wilson (USA), Clemenceau (France) and Orlando (Italy). Wilson's famous fourteen points included national self-determination, but this ideal did not appeal to France which had not forgotten her humiliation of 1870. As a result of the vindictive attitude of France the peace terms imposed upon Germany were very harsh. She was deprived of her colonies which were distributed to the victors as mandates. She was asked to pay an impossible sum in reparations. She lost part of her territories to France and Poland which became again an independent state with a 'corridor' or opening to the sea, cutting Germany in two.

Austria was reduced to a small country and out of the Austro-Hungarian empire were carved three states: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Turkey was deprived of much of her European part which was given to Greece and Bulgaria, but retained Constantinople and Asia Minor. She lost all her Middle East possessions. Syria, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine became mandates—Syria under France, Iraq and Palestine under Britain. Arabia became independent. (Much of this arrangement was later modified to the advantage of Turkey by the Treaty of Lausanne 1923). In northern Europe, three small new states were created along the Baltic coast out of the old Czarist empire. These were Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Finland was freed from Russia and became independent. The greatest defect of these divisions was the presence of large minorities of Germans under Italy, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Hitler was to make these minorities his excuse for the invasion of Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1939.

The League of Nations

The League of Nations, the brain child of President Wilson, was an integral part of the Versailles Treaty. It was created with the object of preventing war and settling peacefully all international disputes. It provided for 'sanctions', both economic and military which might be applied against any country that was guilty of aggression. The league also proposed disarmament of the allies, but this, as future events were to show, did not make any headway and became a joke. The League had its headquarters at Geneva in Switzerland. Germany and Russia were excluded from the League,

and the United States refused to join it to the great disappointment of Wilson as well as others who had built upon it their hopes for a peaceful world in the future.

Britain between the Wars

In the war of 1914-18 British losses in both men and materials were very heavy. Nearly a million men from the United Kingdom and the Empire were killed. Forty per cent of her shipping had been sunk. The national debt had increased enormously. Her exports which had declined even before the war were now reduced to half. There were many reasons for this. Britain had lost many of her pre-war world markets. Germany was now supplying coal and iron to France and Italy as part of the reparations. Europe had been impoverished and had little purchasing power. The spread of the Industrial Revolution had brought in new competitors. China, Japan, and India were now producing cotton cloth which was formerly supplied by Lancashire. The coal mining industry of Britain was the hardest hit, for petrol and electricity had replaced steam power in other countries. Besides, Britain had fallen behind other countries in the application of newer and improved methods of industrial production.

Decline in exports compelled British industries to reduce production, and this in turn resulted in unemployment. Unemployment, of course, had existed in Britain before the war, but in the post-war years it assumed alarming proportions. By the end of 1931, the number of the unemployed had reached three million.

Inevitably the post-war years, especially 1918-33, witnessed a good deal of industrial unrest. Lloyd George had to face, not one or two, but thousands of strikes, and Baldwin's Conservative government is memorable for the general strike of 1926.

In 1931, Britain was in the midst of a grave financial crisis. The collapse of stock prices on New York Stock Exchange in October 1929 had let loose a wave of economic depression that swamped the whole world. International trade stagnated and Britain's touched a new low. The situation was saved by the bold, patriotic step taken by Ramsay Macdonald, head of the Labour Government at the time. He resigned (14 August 1931) and immediately after formed a National Government of Conservatives, Liberals and a handful of his Labour associates. In doing so he sacrificed his political future, but he saved his country. He was branded as a traitor by the Labour Party, but he felt that loyalty to the country was higher than loyalty to the party. He staved off the crisis by imposing tariffs on imports (except raw materials and foodstuffs) and higher income tax, and by drastic reduction in government expenditure including cuts in unemployment benefits, salaries of civil servants, teachers, etc. Such measures were made possible only through Mac's national and non-party approach. Eventually the economy recovered. Employment figures rose considerably in 1932-35. In 1934, income tax was reduced and the cut in unemployment benefit withdrawn. In 1935, the

salaries of all public servants were restored to their pre-crisis level. Wages had fallen, but the cost of living was lowered by a greater fall in prices. Thus for persons in employment the years 1935-39 were a prosperous period. The problem of unemployment was not solved completely. Little was done to remove mass unemployment in certain 'depressed' or 'special' areas like Scotland, South Wales, West Cumberland and the Tyneside. Unemployment remained a problem beyond anyone's control. On the whole, however, the National Government of 1931-39 enjoyed great popularity.

The only remarkable feature of the British political scene in the inter-war years was the gradual displacement of the Liberal Party by the Labour Party. The Liberals had their last innings under Asquith. The manner in which Lloyd George had ousted Asquith split the party into two groups: Lloyd George Liberals and Asquith Liberals. This was the beginning of the end. Never afterwards were the Liberals to form their own government.

After the eclipse of Lloyd George, British politics was dominated by Baldwin and Ramsay Macdonald. Because of Britain's attenuated resources neither Lloyd George nor his successors were able to introduce any spectacular social reforms. Some improvements in the condition of the working classes were nevertheless made. These among others included slum-clearing, cheap houses, and extension of benefits under Pensions and Unemployment Insurance. Baldwin was a moderate Conservative and was not opposed to reforms. On the other hand, being an industrialist himself, he was anxious to protect the interests of his class. Thus situated he could do but little in the way of social reform. His regime (1924-29) is, however, notable for giving women equal franchise with men (1928). As for Ramsay Macdonald who formed two Labour Governments, first in 1924, and then in 1929-31, the lack of a clear Labour majority made it impossible for him to introduce radical reforms like nationalisation of industries. On both occasions he ran the government with the help of Liberals whose support was uncertain. It was only when he gave up the party leadership (1931) and formed a National Government that he was able to relieve unemployment, save the pound and restore Britain's economy. In 1935, he resigned for reasons of health and Baldwin took over as head of the National Coalition.

In 1936, economic problems were overshadowed by an extraordinary event that excited not only Britain but the whole world. King Edward VIII had succeeded his father George V on 20 January 1935. He wanted to marry Mrs. Simpson, a twice divorced American. This the Church and British conservatism would not permit. Baldwin himself opposed the contemplated marriage, and the King abdicated (11 December 1936). He was succeeded by his brother, the Duke of York, who became King as George VI. After the new King's coronation in 1937, Baldwin retired from politics, and was soon followed by Ramsay Macdonald who had remained in the cabinet as Lord President of the Council. Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the

Exchequer in the National Government, succeeded Baldwin as Prime Minister (1937-40).

Foreign Affairs

In the 'Khaki' election of 1918, Lloyd George had pleaded for the continuation of the war-time coalition. In the flush of victory the coalition was voted to power, but Lloyd George found himself in an anomalous position. He headed a coalition government dominated by Conservatives. He favoured a conciliatory policy towards Germany and Russia. British trade, he reasoned, would gain if Europe was prosperous. The Conservatives were opposed to this policy. The hatred and passions roused by the war had not yet subsided. Lloyd George's successors, both Macdonald and Baldwin, pursued a little later the very same policy and got credit for it; but at the Geneva Conference in April 1922 in which Lloyd George pleaded with the French to reduce their reparations demands from Germany, and for the British and European recognition of Russia, he met with no success. On the other hand, Germany and Russia formed an alliance by which Germany recognised the Soviet Government. All this was blamed on Lloyd George. He was also blamed for Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 which conferred on Ireland the status of a Dominion. Finally came the withdrawal of British forces from the Dardanelles which they had been guarding as part of the International commission as provided in the treaty of Sevres (French town) with Turkey which was part of the Versailles settlement. This treaty was never ratified because of delays, and before long the entire situation was changed by happenings in Turkey. An army officer Mustafa Kamal or Kamal Ataturk became head of the Turkish Nationalists, deposed the Sultan who was also Khalifa or head of the Moslem world, and proclaimed Turkey a republic with himself as dictator. While giving up all claims on Middle East, he was determined to repudiate the Versailles settlement in respect of Turkish territories in Europe. To coerce him to abide by the treaty of Sevres would have meant another war, but the powers of western Europe were unwilling to fight. So Kamal won back European Turkey and advanced to take possession of the straits of Dardanelles. In the face of this menace the British withdrew. The treaty of Sevres was modified in favour of Turkey by the Treaty of Lausanne (Switzerland) in 1923.

Lloyd George was held responsible for British humiliation, and coming as it did on top of all their other grouses, the Conservatives decided to oust him. He resigned, the coalition was dissolved, and the Conservatives formed their own government under the leadership of Bonar Law (1922-23). Bonar Law resigned owing to ill health, and Baldwin became Prim. Minister (1923-24). He lost on the issue of Protection and was replaced by Ramsay Macdonald (1924). Under pressure from the Labour Party he recognised the Communist Government of Russia. The Conservatives brought a motion of censure which was passed with the support of Liberals.

Ramsay Macdonald stepped down and Baldwin again became Prime Minister (1924-29). In the general election of 1929 the Conservatives lost to Labour and Macdonald formed his second Labour Government (1929-31).

After the Armistice there was a great revulsion of feeling against war. Novels, poems and films appeared depicting the horrors and futility of war. Such books as Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End* and Robert Grave's *Goodbye to All That* were immensely popular. Pacifist sentiments prevailed in Britain. British people as well as British Governments were genuinely anxious to promote the cause of peace. This is reflected in the foreign policies of Lloyd George, Ramsay Macdonald and Baldwin. Both Ramsay Macdonald and Baldwin were men of peace and great believers in the League of Nations. They succeeded in persuading France to reduce the amount of reparations demanded from Germany. This policy of reconciliation helped to ease international tension in the years 1924-29. Their efforts bore fruit in the Locarno (Switzerland) Pact of 1925. By this agreement the Franco-German frontier was guaranteed, the Rhineland demilitarised, and a Franco-German non-aggression agreement was signed. In 1926, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. While this pact was undoubtedly a contribution towards European peace, it was at the same time a violation of the Treaty of Versailles in that Austen Chamberlain, British Foreign Secretary, declared that no British Government would fight to maintain the Polish corridor. He had given a foretaste of his brother Neville Chamberlain's fatal policy of appeasement in the years immediately preceding the second World War.

Ireland

The Home Rule Act of 1914, it will be remembered, was suspended for the duration of the war. This was not acceptable to the Irish Nationalists who intensified their agitation for Irish Free State. This led to the serious Easter Rising of 1916 with the support of German leaders. Although it was suppressed, the extremist agitation of *Sinn Féin* ('We ourselves') continued. In 1918 the *Sinn Féiners* constituted themselves into their own Parliament (the Dail) and set up a parallel government—an independent republic—under the presidency of De Valera. This was ruthlessly suppressed by the Royal Irish Constabulary reinforced by the recently demobilised soldiers called 'Black and Tans' from their Khaki uniforms and black belts. But this did not stop the Freedom movement and a state of war continued between Ireland and Britain. Lloyd George was sympathetic and after much wrangling an Anglo-Irish treaty was concluded conferring Dominion status on Ireland (1921). Strife now began between the moderates who had accepted the treaty and the extremists who insisted upon complete independence as well as the inclusion of northern Ireland or Ulster in the republic. This Irish Civil War continued for some time and many moderate leaders were executed or assassinated. The British efforts to placate the extremists failed

and De Valera proclaimed Ireland an independent republic in April 1937.

The British Commonwealth

After the war a memorable change occurred in Britain's relations with the dominions. Their contribution to Allies' victory had been great. This was recognised in the Statute of Westminster (December 1931) by which the Dominions became independent states in all respects, bound together by a common symbol, the crown. Britain ceased to be the ruling head and became an equal partner in the British Commonwealth.

British Policy in India

That the ultimate aim of British Government in India was democratic self-government was announced by Gladstone during his second Ministry (1880-85). The first important step in that direction was taken in the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909. India had helped the British in the war with both men and materials and hoped for a generous measure of self-rule as reward. Lloyd George in 1917 affirmed Gladstone's declaration and reward came in the shape of Montague-Chelmsford Reforms embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919. It introduced dyarchy or dual control in the provinces under which sources of power were divided into two classes: 'transferred' and 'reserved'. Subjects like education, health, local Self-government, etc. were transferred to Indian Ministers who would be responsible to the legislature. Real sources of power, like foreign affairs, police, armed forces, and finance were reserved to the British Governor who would not be answerable to the legislature. The central government was to consist of the Governor-General in Council and two houses of legislature: the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. These were merely advisory bodies and had no power.

Though some Indians worked the reforms, the Act was denounced by the Congress. Indian feeling against the British had been inflamed by the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar (13 April 1919). The situation was further aggravated by the Khilafat movement of 1920-21, which was a protest against the deposition of the Sultan of Turkey who was also the Khalifa or head of the Muslims. Though the Caliphate or Khilafat had been abolished by Kamal Ataturk, the British were somehow suspected of complicity or connivance. Gandhi had by now appeared on the scene and lent his support to the movement. He led a campaign of 'non-violent non-cooperation' against the British, and later his civil disobedience movement. He was jailed several times, but repressive measures failed to stop the agitation. Thus embarrassed, in 1929 the Viceroy Lord Irwin, promised Dominion status to India. The Simon Commission toured the country to sound public opinion, but was boycotted by the Congress. The Commission's report was published in 1930. The Congress rejected it. There was in it no mention of Dominion status;

on the other hand, it sought to increase the restrictive powers of the Secretary of State, the Governor-General, and the provincial Governors. To resolve the deadlock Ramsay Macdonald called a Round Table Conference in London (1930).

From 1930 to 1932, three sessions of RTC were held, but no agreed formula for an Indian Constitution emerged. The Conference broke down over the Hindu-Muslim problem. The British government thereupon drew up a scheme of its own which was embodied in The Government of India Act of 1935. It provided for a federal centre composed of British Indian provinces and the Princely states. It introduced dyarchy in the Centre and abolished it in the provinces which were made fully autonomous, subject to the Governor's 'Special responsibilities' and over-riding powers in emergencies.

The Act fell far short of Dominion status and was denounced by the Congress. The Muslim League under Mr. Jinnah rejected the federal idea; but was not averse to giving Provincial autonomy a trial. In April 1937, when the Act came into force, Congress governments were formed in seven of the eleven provinces, coalition governments in Sind and Orissa and Muslim League governments in the Punjab and Bengal.

When the second world war broke out in 1939, India was dragged into it without even the courtesy of consulting the Congress. Irritated by this attitude the Congress demanded that the British Government declare India an independent country without delay. The British Government remained non-committal. Thereupon the Congress Ministries resigned (November 1939) and Governor's rule was imposed in the Congress provinces. Mr. Jinnah took full advantage of the situation and inflamed Muslim feeling against the Hindus by his baseless allegations of atrocities perpetrated by Congress governments on the Muslims. The stage was set for the partition of India.

The Locarno Pact (1925) seemed to be the beginning of an era of peace; but this proved to be an illusion as was shown by the events that followed. In 1931, Japan took Manchuria by force. The League of Nations censured Japan but took no further action. Japan withdrew from the League. In 1933, Hitler became the dictator in Germany and at the Disarmament Conference (1932-34) demanded equality of armaments with France. This was rejected and Germany withdrew from the League (1934). Hitler stopped paying reparations and declared his determination to repudiate the Treaty of Versailles. The menacing attitude of Hitler compelled Britain to take measures for self-preparedness. Hitler replied by ordering conscription in defiance of the Versailles Treaty. He too was censured by the League for repudiating the Versailles Treaty. Strangely enough, however, this condemnation was followed by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement by which Germany's Navy was limited to 35 per cent of the British Navy (June 1935). The same year Mussolini attacked Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and conquered it (1936). The emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Selassie, took shelter in Britain. Half-hearted economic

sanctions against Italy applied by Britain and other powers had proved ineffective.

In 1936, Hitler's troops occupied the Rhineland which had been demilitarised by the Treaty of Versailles. Still the great powers took no action. In 1938, Hitler annexed Austria—another violation of Versailles. Baldwin had retired in 1937 and Neville Chamberlain was now Prime Minister.

At this point a brief reference may be made to the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. This was a struggle between the Spanish Republicans in power and the rebel forces led by General Franco. The Republic was communist in character while Franco was a fascist. For a time, it appeared that this civil war might engulf the whole of Europe. Volunteers poured into Spain from all Europe including England—to fight for one side or the other. There was a Fascist party in England too, led by Sir Oswald Mosley. The British disliked both the Republican Communists and the Franco fascists, for both meant dictatorship. In order to localise the conflict they proposed non-intervention by European powers; but though the Non-intervention Agreement was signed by all, it was a farce, for Germany and Italy, both fascists, continued helping General Franco. In the upshot the republic was overthrown and Franco became dictator in 1939.

Events Immediately Preceding the Second World War

Because of the sanctions applied against her, Italy withdrew from the League in 1937. Japan and Germany were already out. These three deserters from the League formed what is known as the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis. The only great powers left in the League were Britain, France, and Russia. Thus in 1938 the powers were divided into two hostile groups as in the first world war.

When Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938, the great powers merely protested. Not a hand was raised in defence of Austria's sovereignty. Thus encouraged, in September he demanded from Czechoslovakia the return to Germany of the Sudetenland. This territory in the north-west of Czechoslovakia was lost by Germany after the first World War. It has a predominantly German population which, Hitler alleged, was being mercilessly oppressed by the Czech government. The Czechs were prepared to defend their country, for France and Russia had promised to help them in case of attack. Hitler threatened to occupy Sudetan area on 1 October. War seemed imminent, but was averted by the intercession of Chamberlain. He flew to Germany thrice and at length succeeded in persuading Hitler to spread the occupation over ten days instead of taking the area at one bound. Both Britain and France pressurised Czechoslovakia to accept Hitler's demand. At Munich, a settlement was reached and Hitler declared that he would demand no more Czech territory. In March 1939, Hitler occupied the whole of Czechoslovakia in flagrant violation of his promise given only five months earlier. The excuse this time was the principle of 'self-

preservation' and 'grounds of history'. By 'grounds of history' Hitler meant that Bohemia and Moravia (collectively Czechia) had for thousands of years formed part of Germany under the Holy Roman Empire (First Reich) and under Kaiser (Second Reich). But grounds of history, it was pointed out, did not cover Slovakia which had never been a part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Hitler's repudiation of the Munich agreement convinced Chamberlain and others that no reliance could be placed on the pledges of the Fuhrer. That his real aim like Kaiser's was overlordship of Europe became crystal clear. Realising that his next victim would be Poland, both Britain and France declared on 31 March that if Poland's independence was threatened they would give her all assistance in their power. Since taking advantage of the confusion in Europe resulting from Hitler's actions, Mussolini had seized Albania. Britain and France extended the same guarantee to Rumania and Greece (13 April). They also made an alliance with Turkey. British and French military missions went to Moscow, but behind their back Russia signed a non-aggression pact with Germany.

On 8 April, Hitler abrogated German-Polish treaty of non-aggression of 1934 and Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935. On the same day he demanded Danzig and the Polish Corridor. The demand was rejected by Poland. Britain and France attempted mediation, but to no purpose. On 1 September, Hitler invaded Poland and Warsaw was heavily bombed. Britain sent an ultimatum demanding immediate withdrawal of German troops from Poland. Receiving no reply, Britain declared war on 3 September and was followed the same day by France.

The War lasted six years from September 1939 to August 1945. On one side were Britain, France, Russia and the United States; on the other Germany, Italy and Japan.

Poland, Finland, Denmark and Norway (1939-40)

For more than six months there was no war in the West. Both sides bombarded each other not with shells but with propaganda pamphlets. During this period, Hitler was occupied in the east. Poland was seized and partitioned between Germany and Russia. Russia also took Finland in order to strengthen her north-west frontier. For this aggression she was expelled from the League. After Poland, Hitler took first Denmark and then Norway. The British and French expeditions sent to help Norway failed completely and withdrew.

Battle of Britain (1940-41)

In the summer of 1940 and the winter of 1940-41, Hitler attempted conquest of British isles. The furious aerial bombing (Blitz) of London and other big cities inflicted heavy damage on civilian population, but failed to disrupt British military production.

Conquest of France (1941)

Having failed in the Battle of Britain, Hitler turned upon France. Completely by-passing the Maginot line of fortifications, the German armies smashed through Belgium and the Netherlands and drove the British and French armies to the Channel coast. With the greatest difficulty 350 000 men out of 400,000 were evacuated through the French port of Dunkirk. The French surrendered and were allowed to rule part of France under Marshal Petain with headquarters at Vichy. The Frenchmen who had landed in Britain set up the Free French Government under General de Gaulle.

North Africa and the Middle East (1941-43)

Though the British now stood alone, they drove the Italians from North Africa. They called for German help. General Rommel, one of the greatest German generals advanced deep into Egypt, but was defeated by General Montgomery at the desert battle of El Alamein (October 1942). Meanwhile, General Eisenhower at the head of American forces arrived in Morocco, and Rommel was trapped between two armies. By May 1943 the whole of North Africa was cleared of the enemy. Over three lakhs of German and Italian soldiers surrendered and were taken prisoner.

In the Middle East Syria and Lebanon, under the control of the Vichy French, were easily taken, and a pro-British government was installed in Iraq.

Italy (1941-45)

Mussolini had attacked Yugoslavia and Greece, but found himself in difficulties. A German army came to his rescue and soon overran the two Balkan states. The British force sent to help them was driven out. The Italian fleet was completely defeated (1940-41). In July 1943, the Allied forces (British-American) took Sicily. The Italians by now sick of Mussolini at once surrendered. Mussolini took shelter with the Germans who continued fighting in Italy almost to the end of the war. Early in 1945 the dictator was captured and shot in a village near Milan.

Russia (1941-45)

After his conquest of France, Hitler decided to attack Russia despite the Russo-German pact of August 1939. The Russians under Stalin fought bravely in defence of their country. Stalingrad was almost taken by the Germans when they were suddenly surrounded by another Russian army. In the famous siege of Stalingrad which lasted nearly six months (September 1942 to end of January 1943) the entrapped Germans numbering 300,000 fought without food and ammunition under Hitler's orders not to surrender, until the German general finding the situation hopeless surrendered in defiance of the Fuhrer's order. Stalingrad was the turning point of

the war. The Germans were driven out through Russia and Poland back into Germany, losing nearly a million men. Russia recovered all her territory, took the Balkan states in her stride and marched into Germany.

Allied Invasion of Northern Europe (1944-45)

On D-day, 6 June 1944, the Allied forces under General Eisenhower invaded Normandy and took it within a week. They entered Paris, liberated the whole of France and drove the Germans over the eastern frontier. They were joined by other forces in the South of France and by General Alexander's army from Italy. Germany was invaded by these armies in the west and by Russia in the east. Berlin was taken and Hitler committed suicide on 30 April 1945. Germany surrendered unconditionally on 7 May.

The whole of Germany was occupied by the allies. All German forces were disarmed and disbanded. Prisoners in the concentration camps were released. Those who had committed war crimes as well as those who were responsible for making war were tried and punished by military courts set up by the allies at Nuremburg. West Germany attained sovereignty in 1955.

Japan and the Far East (1941-45)

Japan attacked the United States Navy stationed at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, early in the morning of 7 December 1941 without any warning or declaration of war, and while a Japanese delegation was still in Washington negotiating a settlement on outstanding disputes between the two countries. This action brought America into the war and changed its entire character. The Axis powers were doomed.

Like Germany, Japan won quick victories in the beginning. Hong-kong, the Philippines, Malaya and Burma fell one after another. The American general MacArthur commanded in the Pacific and Lord Louis Mountbatten in south-east Asia. After the collapse of Germany, the allies were able to strengthen their offensive in the far East. They recovered all their territories and invaded Japan. Although Germany and Italy had capitulated, Japan continued to fight. By this time the atom bomb had been made in America. On 6 August 1945, an atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and on 9 August another on Nagasaki. Both towns lay in ruins and hundreds of thousand were killed or maimed for life. No further action was necessary. Japan surrendered unconditionally. The war had ended.

Japan was occupied by American forces under MacArthur. Unlike in Germany, an elected Japanese government was set up to act under the general control of MacArthur. Japanese war criminals and Japanese leaders who had made war were tried and punished. Japan regained her independence in 1952.

United Nations Organization

The League of Nations became an ineffective body after 1936. Its

belated expulsion of Russia in 1943 was merely an exercise in futility. In August 1941, Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill issued what has come to be known as the 'Atlantic Charter'. In this document they stated their war aims. These were national self-determination and economic co-operation among nations, for in no other way could peace be maintained in the world. Then in April 1945, even before German surrender, a conference of the allies and many other nations was held at San Francisco to establish a body to be called the United Nations Organisation to replace the League of Nations. It has an Assembly on which all member-nations are represented, a Security Council composed of the great powers and a few of the lesser states, and an International Court of Justice at the Hague for the settlement of international disputes. The UNO is an improvement over the League in that the Security Council has the power to take direct action against the aggressors. This, however, is nullified by the provision that a great power can veto any proposed action. Russia has used her veto several times. It was only because of Russia's absence from UNO in 1950 that it was able to take direct action against the communist North Korea by sending American troops to fight for South Korea. Imperfect as it is, the UNO is the only hope for peace and stability in a world of conflicting ideologies and interests.

Britain since the Second World War

Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler had annoyed many Britishers including Churchill, and matters came to a head in 1940. The complete failure of Britain's Norwegian campaign was blamed on Chamberlain even by his own party, and he resigned. Churchill became head of the Coalition and proved his mettle by carrying on the war to a triumphant issue.

Early in 1945 Churchill pleaded for the continuance of the Coalition till the end of war with Japan. The Labour ministers, however, were getting restive and promised to remain in the Cabinet another six months. Deciding to form an independent government of his own, Churchill held an election in July which he hoped to win on the strength of his personal appeal as the person who had led the nation to victory. The result, however, was an overwhelming majority for Labour.

The Labour Government under Clement Atlee (1945-51) carried out far reaching social reforms, which extended the scope of the Welfare state. The most notable of these were the provision of free medical treatment to everyone and the insurance of every worker from the time he left school until he retired. On retirement there was a pension for men at 65 and for women at 60.

Nationalisation being a cardinal principle of socialism, the Atlee Government nationalised the Bank of England as well as several industries, such as coal mining, transport and communications, etc. The nationalisation of steel, however, was strongly resisted and the Bill

passed by the House of Commons was rejected by the Lords. Atlee, like Asquith in 1911, then had a resolution passed by the Commons, which reduced the Lords' power of delaying a Bill from two years to one.

In the general election of February 1950 the Labour majority was reduced to six. The party was weakened by the death of two leading ministers: Ernest Bevin and Sir Stafford Cripps. Two others, Aneurin Bevan and Harold Wilson resigned when Hugh Gaitskill, Chancellor of the Exchequer, withdrew spectacles and dentures from free health service. Continuance of industrial controls and rationing were proving irksome to the people. To test his strength Atlee called another election in October 1951. The Labour Party lost to the Conservatives who led by Churchill formed their government with a majority of seventeen.

Conservative Government (1951-64)

The Conservative Government lasted 13 years. During this period it was headed by four Prime Ministers: Churchill (1951-55), Anthony Eden (1955-57), Harold Macmillan (1957-63), Sir Alec Douglas Home (1963-64).

The Churchill Government denationalised steel and road transport, ended rationing in 1954 and built over a million of new houses. In 1952, George VI died and was succeeded by his daughter Elizabeth II. Because of failing health Churchill resigned in 1955, and was succeeded by Eden as Prime Minister.

In the general election of 1955 the Conservatives improved their majority to sixty. Eden's blunder over the Suez affair (1956) roused a storm of indignation and he had to resign in 1957.

Macmillan who took over from Eden restored the prestige of the Conservative government by the energetic steps he took to revive British economy by long-term planning. In the general election of 1959 the Conservative majority was over a hundred. In 1961, the Macmillan administration was faced with serious economic difficulties—pay 'freeze', poor trade balance, etc. In 1963, Macmillan tried hard for Britain's entry into the European Common Market, but was rebuffed by De Gaulle. Then came the Profumo scandal. Mr. Profumo, War Secretary, was found to have been familiar with a young woman, Miss Christine Keeler, who was also a friend of a Soviet diplomat. The Prime Minister was sharply criticised for his mishandling the whole affair, and he resigned in October 1963.

Lord Home resigned his peerage and took over as Prime Minister. In the election of 1964, Labour was returned to power with a majority of five.

Labour Government (1964-70)

The basic problem which the Labour Government under Harold Wilson had to face was the chronic instability of Britain's economy.

Productivity did not keep pace with rising wages and prices. The British were spending more on imports than they earned by exports—a state of affairs that has plagued Britain's economy through the century. Wilson had to adopt extreme measures such as wage and price freeze in 1966. When even these failed to check inflation he was forced to a further devaluation of the Pound in 1967.

In the general election of June 1970, contrary to all expectations, Labour was defeated and the Conservatives led by Edward Heath formed their government. It was one of the most stunning political upsets in British history.

In addition to the old economic problem, the new Government is faced with serious issues involving foreign and race relations. The issue that has been hanging fire for some time is the unilateral declaration of independence by Rhodesia in November 1965. Another knotty problem is that of restricting coloured immigration from Commonwealth countries. The latest to raise its head is the question of supplying arms to South Africa which practises 'apartheid' or racial discrimination.

Sale of arms to South Africa was banned by UNO in 1963.

Socio-economic Conditions in Britain since the War

The second World War crippled Britain even more seriously than the first. Apart from huge casualties in men, five million houses had been destroyed, and a third of its shipping had been sunk. All her foreign assets had been sold, she owed enormous debts to USA, Canada and other countries, and her exports were reduced to less than half the pre-war figure. The measures taken by her governments to rehabilitate her shaken economy were rationalisation of her old industries, establishment of new ones, nationalisation and planning. The new industries include motor cars, aircraft, electrical goods, synthetic fibres, whisky, etc. Under nationalisation and long-term planning more and more of the national economy has been brought under direct government control.

In the sphere of social reform, long strides have been taken in the direction of the Welfare State. The condition of the working classes has vastly improved. They enjoy large unemployment, sickness, and disability benefits, pensions, children's allowances, etc. Under the National Health Service every citizen is assured of free medical treatment.

Despite her recurring economic crisis Britain's standard of living today is higher than ever before. The large measure of social security and the high standard of living that the British enjoy have been made possible by heavy American aid. In the long run Britain will have to build up a stable and self-sufficient economy to be able to maintain her present living standards. This can be achieved by increasing her industrial production at costs that may enable her to sell her goods in a competitive world market.

Foreign Affairs from 1945 to 1970

After the second World War Britain was reduced to the position of a second class power, her supremacy having passed to USA and Russia. Her shaken economy made it impossible for her to maintain troops overseas. One by one her overseas possessions have broken away and become independent units. Quite a few of them have chosen to remain associated with Britain as equal partners in a Commonwealth. Others like South Africa and Burma have kept out. The British empire has disappeared.

Europe

In 1947, George Marshall, American Secretary of State, introduced his plan for the economic recovery of Europe. Vast sums were placed at the disposal of a body called the Organ for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC). Russia and her satellites—Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia—refused to join. The 'Iron Curtain' had come down and the division of Europe into Eastern (Communist) and Western (Free) became an unpleasant reality. President Truman promulgated the 'Truman Doctrine' to defend the free or democratic states of western Europe against Russian designs.

These designs became clear when in March 1948, Russia closed all surface routes from the eastern to the western sector of Berlin in an attempt to force the allies to withdraw. The allies foiled this attempt by resorting to huge air-lift which lasted 14 months. The Russians lifted the Berlin Blockade in May 1949.

Fear of Russia led to the formation of NATO or North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (1949). It consisted of most of the states of western Europe as well as USA and Canada. The first supreme commander of NATO forces was General Eisenhower with headquarters in Paris.

In recent years, NATO has run into difficulties; de Gaulle did not like USA domination. Moreover, he thought that the Russian threat had receded. He demanded removal of the organisation's headquarters from Paris and threatened withdrawal. The USA has announced her intention to economise on the cost of her troops in Europe. Britain too is anxious to reduce her NATO troops. It is difficult at the moment to predict the future of the organisation.

In 1960, an American spyship was shot down over Russia. This incident further strained the relations between East and West, and Khrushchev walked out of a summit meeting in Paris in protest. In 1961 the Iron Curtain was emphasised by the erection by Russia of the Berlin Wall which cut off West from East Berlin. In 1962 the world came very close to war over the Cuban crisis. USA planes photographed rocket sites in Cuba built by Russia. President Kennedy took what was perhaps the boldest military action in modern history by ordering a naval blockade of all Russian ships to

prevent further supplies of war materials to Cuba. This had the desired effect and Khrushchev ordered all Russian ships on high seas to turn back. Kennedy had taken the momentous decision on his own. Britain was not consulted. In 1963 was signed the Test Ban Treaty by which USA, Russia and Britain agreed to suspend testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere.

By the treaty of Rome (1958) was created the European Economic Community (EEC) or the Common Market, comprising six countries: France, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Italy, and West Germany. Since then it has been joined by Britain, Ireland and Scandinavia. The Common Market has achieved remarkable success in the growth of industrial production and trade.

China

In 1912, China became a republic under Dr. Sun Yat Sen after overthrowing the old and tyrannical imperial dynasty. After his death in 1925, his successor General Chiang Kai Shek began his offensive against the Communists. After a long struggle he and his party were driven out from the mainland of China by the Communists headed by Mao Tse-tung (1949). Chiang took shelter in Formosa where he and his party, the Kuomintang, carry on a government of sorts under the protection of USA.

Korean War (1950-54)

The communist North Korea attacked South Korea. The UNO sent an international force composed mainly of Americans, some British and others to help South Korea. The Korean war ended in 1954 and boundaries between the two Koreas were fixed at 38th parallel.

Middle East

Palestine. The Jews were driven away from Palestine by the Romans and Jerusalem was destroyed (70 A.D.). The Jewish State ceased to exist and Palestine passed first to the Arab Empire and then to the Turkish empire. It was taken from Turkey in the first world war and was given to the British as a mandate by the League of Nations. In 1917, during the war, Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, declared the establishment in Palestine of a homeland for the Jewish people. (This is called the Belfour Declaration.) Jews from all parts of the world began to pour into Palestine and this immigration increased considerably during and after the second World War when Jews in large numbers escaped from Germany because of Nazi persecution. But the Arabs in Palestine were hostile to the Jews and there were clashes between the two. The British difficulties increased and they curbed further immigration. The hostility did not abate and there was a short war in 1947. Britain turned over her responsibilities in Palestine to USA in 1948. Palestine was then

partitioned into the Jewish state of Israel and the Arab state of Jordan. Jerusalem was internationalised. The neighbouring Arab states refuse to recognise Israel which, however, has developed into a strong, well-knit state that is holding her own against them all. In the most serious clash so far between Jews and Arabs, viz. the 'Six days' war' of 1967, Israel inflicted a crushing defeat on Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The Israeli-Arab deadlock continues.

Egypt. Egypt had been occupied by the British in 1882. After a long and blood-stained struggle she gained her independence in 1936. Because of Italy's conquest of Ethiopia which roused her fears about possible Italian aggression, she agreed to the retention of British troops in the vicinity of the Suez Canal and to the establishment of British naval bases at Alexandria and Port Said.

In 1950-51, relations between Britain and Egypt became strained because of King Farouk's aggressive attitude to the British occupation of the Suez Canal. A military *coup* ousted Farouk in 1952, but his successor Colonel Nasser also insisted on British evacuation from the Suez area. British troops were accordingly withdrawn in 1954.

Nasser needed aid for his project to build the Aswan High Dam and was not particular about who gave it. Russians were the first to offer aid, but their offer was capped by one from Britain and USA in 1955. After making the offer, however, the Anglo-Americans realised that Nasser was definitely pro-Russian and in 1956 withdrew their offer. This rattled Nasser who replied by nationalising the Suez Canal and promising compensation to the British, French and other share-holders of the Canal Company. This was unacceptable to Eden, British Prime Minister. Peaceful means to settle the dispute having failed, Britain and France in collusion with Israel attacked Egypt (29-30 October 1956) and occupied a part of the canal. The Franco-British action was condemned by UNO and British and French forces withdrew. Eden was criticised even by his own party and he resigned.

The British withdrew from Aden in 1967. The Anglo-Egyptian condominium in Sudan ended in 1953 and Sudan became independent in 1954.

India. Congress withdrawal from Provincial Governments in 1939 threw Mr. Jinnah in the lap of the British. They encouraged him to press his claim for the partition of India. At the Lahore session of the Muslim League in 1940, Jinnah propounded his two-nation theory. The Congress offered to help British war efforts on the condition that they immediately transfer power to Indian hands. To this the British did not agree. To make matters worse Churchill declared that the Atlantic Charter would not apply to India. In March 1942, the Cripps Mission came out to India, to rally Indian forces to meet the Japanese menace on her eastern frontier. The Mission failed. In August 1942, the Congress served the British

Government with an ultimatum asking them to quit India at once and threatening a mass movement if they refused to do so. Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee were thereupon arrested and jailed. This action of the Government led to a violent explosion of feelings throughout the country. Violence broke out and demonstrating mobs attacked police stations, post offices and railways, etc. The movement was put down with the utmost severity. There were hundreds of police and army firings and many people were killed or wounded. Gandhi went on a 21 day fast as a protest against the government's atrocities. Leaders of Indian opinion appealed to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to release Gandhi, but he refused. All the three Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council resigned in protest.

The Quit India agitation subsided, and Lord Wavell, the new Viceroy, released Gandhi and the other Congress leaders in 1944. In 1945, Churchill fell and was succeeded by Clement Atlee. He sent a Cabinet Mission which recommended a Federal Union of British and the princely states and grouped the provinces on a communal basis. This was a tacit acceptance of the two nation theory. There was to be an interim government until a Constitutional Assembly drew up a constitution.

In July 1946 elections to the Constituent Assembly resulted in an over-whelming majority of Congress members. This infuriated Jinnah. He refused to join the Constituent Assembly and threatened 'direct action'. This direct action (16 August) was not against the British but against the Hindus. It resulted in the mass killings of Hindus by Muslims in Calcutta, Midnapur, Noakhali, and other places in Bengal under the Muslim League dominated government.

On 2 September 1946, an Interim Government was formed at the centre with Jawaharlal Nehru as Vice-President. Five Muslims joined the government. Instead of working with the non-Muslim members as a team they conducted themselves like members of the Opposition. A greater deadlock, however, was Jinnah's refusal to join the Constituent Assembly. In this state of affairs, Atlee announced in February 1947 that the British would withdraw, in any case in 1947. This announcement was followed by a terrible communal war in the Punjab in which nearly a million people were killed. The Muslim majority packed by Muslim police, Muslim officers and their British masters perpetrated indescribable outrages on Hindus and Sikhs. Six million Hindus (including Sikhs) left their hearths and homes and fled to the neighbouring Hindu provinces. This harrowing tragedy broke the resistance of Gandhi and Nehru to the partition of the country. In March 1947, Lord Mountbatten came out as Viceroy and unfolded his plan of partition. In July 1947, the India Independence Act was passed by the British Parliament creating two new Dominions of India and Pakistan. Power was transferred on 15 August 1947.

Dissolution of the Empire

Indian independence was soon followed by that of Burma, Ceylon and later (1957) Malaya including Singapore. From 1957 to 1964 all British territories in Africa except Rhodesia won their independence. Rhodesia declared her independence unilaterally in 1965. The deadlock between Britain and Rhodesia is still unresolved. Cyprus became independent in 1960. South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961 over the apartheid issue, and Pakistan broke away as a protest against British recognition of Bangladesh in January 1972.

Postscript. Since the above was written events, some of them of far-reaching significance for world peace, have taken place.

(1) After persistent efforts Britain was admitted to the European Common Market on 22 January 1972.

(2) The tensions over East and West Berlin have been eased by an agreement (signed 3 June 1972) by the foreign ministers of Britain, France, USA and Russia, which ensures free traffic between the two sectors of the city, which lies 176 kilometres inside East Germany.

(3) West Germany and Russia have concluded and put into effect a non-aggression treaty.

(4) Russia and USA have come closer by trade agreements between the two countries.

(5) Both USA and Japan have made friends with Communist China and thrown Formosa overboard. In the UNO Chiang Kai Shek's China has been replaced by Mao's China.

(6) Heath's Conservative Government lasted a little over three and a half years. The coal miners' strike in February 1974 forced it to order a snap election which it lost to Labour led by Harold Wilson. Since Wilson's Government is a minority government, and since no coalition is practicable because of sharp and irreconcilable differences between the parties, it may be toppled any moment. The situation poses a threat to Britain's political stability.

Social Revolution in Britain

The 20th century has witnessed revolutionary changes in British society. Viewing the social scene of the last 70 years one can discern three chief features. They are the emergence of a more or less egalitarian society, increased material well-being, and moral confusion.

The first two features are a natural corollary to the steady movement towards the ideal of Welfare State. Heavy taxation necessitated by dissemination of social benefits all round has levelled down the richer classes and considerably reduced the disparities of income between different groups. This together with the enormous expansion of education at both school and university levels has helped to make the community more democratic in outlook and softened the rigidity of the British social hierarchy. The old joke that in England there

are only two classes—Dukes and other people—has lost its point. Though the House of Commons is still largely middle class, the working classes are much better off than they were ever before. A few submerged groups do exist, but by and large England is an “affluent society”.

As against these improvements there is the distressing spectacle of moral breakdown. After the first World War people were disillusioned; after the second they were bewildered. The bewilderment continues. There is a general loss of faith in religion and in traditional values. Science and psychology have deprived man of whatever sense he had of personal responsibility in private conduct. All authoritarian morality is repudiated. Mass media of communication—the cinema, the radio, television—have also played their part in contributing to moral degradation.

This attitude of indifference to moral and spiritual values has been accentuated by a feeling of insecurity, by the haunting fear that a nuclear war might any day end our civilization. Nothing is certain; life is meaningless. Moral inhibitions are a tyranny. So we hear of a “sexual revolution”, a “new morality”, a “permissive society” England is faced with a crisis of culture.

This moral anarchy is reflected in the literature and the arts of the last 50 years. They are aimless, anti-heroic, decadent. Philosophers have done little to counteract this drift to moral chaos. They have, in fact, fallen in line with the anarchists by asserting that moral judgments have no objective validity, that they are merely subjective expressions of feeling. Well-meaning attempts to uphold moral traditions have been made by literary critics like Eliot and Leavis, but their influence has been negligible. The malaise continues.

CHAPTER 44

TWENTIETH CENTURY LITERATURE: POETRY (GENERAL)

Introduction—Poetry: 1880-1920, 1920-30, 1930 to the present day.

The long shadows of two World Wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45 lie across the present century. Science and technology have transformed our lives. The motor car, the aeroplane, the wireless and television have brought the world together in a sense never dreamt of before. The cinema has almost ousted the theatre; even where the tradition of the stage is strong enough to survive, it has infected the technique of the drama, even of the novel.

The political consequences of the first World War were communism in Russia and as a reaction against this, totalitarianism in Germany and Italy. The second World War split the world into two blocs, the East dominated by Russia, the West by America. Apart from the little wars going on in South-east Asia, Middle East, and Africa, the world today is living under the threat of a third global and nuclear war whose consequences are too horrible to imagine.

England which before the first Great War was capitalist is now a full-fledged Welfare State. By huge borrowings from USA she is maintaining a high standard of living, but 'the condition of England' question is as acute as ever. Strikes, total or go-slow, are menacingly frequent. Her empire has been liquidated and she has been reduced to the status of a second class power. Though still a leading member of the Commonwealth, she is desperately trying to be integrated in the European Community. The British are now content to be less British and more European. Their proud isolation from Europe is on the way out.

English literature before the first World War was firmly rooted in the Victorian Age. Poetry, drama and prose fictions were all in a flourishing state. Poetry could boast such names as Hardy, Bridges, Housman and Yeats who had begun to write before the 19th century was out. Hardy's monumental *Dynasts* came in 1909. In the early years of the present century came the 'Georgians' Bottomley, Abercrombie, Masefield, Gibson, Davies and de la Mare.

Drama was in a still healthier state when the present century

opened. Shaw, Galsworthy and Barrie were its shining lights, supported at a lower level by Pinero, Jones and Granville Barker. Yeats and Synge created and developed an independent Irish theatre at Dublin. The Novel in the early years of the century was close behind the drama with such writers as Meredith, Hardy, Anthony Hope, Galsworthy, Wells, Kipling, Bennett and Conrad.

All this brilliant activity was interrupted, if not shattered, by the war of 1914-18. The flower of British youth including those who would have produced good literature died in battle. War induced a neurosis. There was a sense of loss, disenchantment, frustration. The younger generation revolted against Victorian ideals, and when after the war they took up their pens they smote hard against what they called the cant and humbug of traditional standards of life and art. Aggressive realism became the hall-mark of 'modern' literature. There was complete anarchy in poetry. The realistic novel became subjective, sex-ridden, and freakish (*Ulysses*, *Mrs. Dalloway*). The drama was not so adversely affected. The great masters Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie held the stage during and after the war, and when they died or aged, their place was taken by popular entertainers like Noel Coward, Terence Rattigan, J.B. Priestley and others. Nevertheless the literary brilliance of the older school faded away from the stage.

By the 20s a sense of cultural crisis had gripped the serious writer. In the prevailing moral confusion he felt lonely and isolated from the society at large which was indifferent to good art. Popular journalism boosted 'cheap' literature and encouraged hostility to anything that savoured of instruction. The serious writer had two choices: either to compromise his principles or to cease writing altogether. An old liberal, like Forster, followed the latter course, while others like Maugham and Huxley jumped on to the popular bandwagon by making in their fiction the necessary concession of sex interest—an interest that is patently forced. Literature was commercialised.

It must be remembered, however, that not all the consequences for literature were caused by the war. English literature of the 20th century, whether simply 'modern' or distinctively 'modernist' has been fed to a great extent in theme as well as in technique by continental writers. Ibsen's impact on drama dates from the 90s of the 19th century. The French realists Guy de Maupassant and Emile Zola, and the Russian writers Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov, whose works were translated early in the twentieth century, have exercised a marked influence on the English novel. The technique of 'modernist' poetry headed by T.S. Eliot has been borrowed from the French symbolists Verlaine, Mallarmé, Baudelaire, La Fontaine, etc. Besides, English literature has been profoundly affected by the philosophy of Bergson (French), the psychology of William James (American) and the analytical psychology of Freud (Austrian). Bergson's 'elan vital' became Shaw's 'life-force'. His emphasis on intuition as opposed to intellect and reason led to D.H.

Lawrence's cult of the flesh. James's conception of consciousness as a river or stream with submerged and floating memories and constantly changing impressions of the external world resulted in the "stream of consciousness" novel of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, through the work of Marcel Proust. Freud's theories of infantile sexuality (Oedipus complex), suppressed sexuality, dreams, the unconscious, the sub-conscious, neurosis and insanity gave a new dimension to the novel. Sex and psychology became the stock themes of many novelists.

Poetry: 1880-1920

As has been indicated above, modern poetry was not exclusively a product of the war. The period roughly from 1880 to 1920 was one of transition during which the main-stream was Victorian, but it was crossed by other currents, more or less definitely modern. The foundations of modern or more specifically 'modernist' poetry were laid during this transitional period. This may be seen in the work of Fitzgerald and Swinburne, both of whom were rebels, the one in his melancholy hedonism and the other in his pagan animality. The decadents of the 'art for art's sake' school were directly descended from Swinburne and the French symbolists. Hopkins acclaimed as the first of the moderns was dead in 1889 and Hardy, adopted patron of the moderns, owed nothing to the Victorian tradition. The Edwardians and the Georgians had begun to seek new ways of expression, but they went no further than avoiding Victorian diction. The notable Georgians Bottomley, Abercrombie, Masefield, Gibson, Davies, De la Mare were 'modern' in the limited sense of poets who showed either marked realism like Masefield and Gibson or had the tight texture of Bottomley and the rugged and harsh metres of Abercrombie. The Georgians were 'modern', but not 'modernist'—a term reserved for those of the younger generation who were anti-romantic in spirit and violently opposed to Victorian diction. They professed stern realism and insisted on common or colloquial speech.

The leaders of the modernist school were two Americans; Pound and Eliot. Anti-romantic in spirit they drew their inspiration from the symbolists. The symbolists believed in indirect statement as opposed to direct, and in free association of ideas as opposed to logical sequence. In addition, they used certain objects as symbols to convey their meaning. From the symbolists also they borrowed their invention of *vers de libre* or 'free verse'.

From symbolists was derived the *Imagism* of Pound. Imagism insisted on definite clear-cut images of sense perceptions, especially visual perceptions without any romantic vagueness. It also eschewed thought and reflection. Pound's imagist anthology appeared in 1914. Though supported by Eliot and Edith Sitwell, Imagism had a very short vogue. Except in eschewing thought it is difficult to see how Imagism differs from other good poetry. And in eliminating thought it doomed itself to sterility. In actual fact Pound's imagist poems are not without thought. "Thoughtless" poetry is a contradiction in

terms. Realising how impracticable his theory was, he abandoned it to write his interminable cantos.

Then came the war. There was a spate of war poetry, most of it of little importance and now forgotten, the only exceptions being the poems of Sassoon and Wilfred Owen who was killed in war in 1918. His *Strange Meeting* between two dead soldiers (representing the two sides) is perhaps the most intensely tragic poem of the time.

The war had induced a mood of depression as well as a revulsion of feeling against European civilisation. In this atmosphere were published Eliot's satirical poems styled *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917). Hopkin's *Poems* appeared in 1918 and Owen's *Poems* in 1920. These three were much more than mere pointers; they embodied the spirit of modernist poetry. This spirit was further defined in the "new criticism" of Eliot, Richards and Leavis; Eliot's *Sacred Wood* (1920) and the periodical *The Criterion* (1922-29); Richards's *Principles of Criticism* (1924) and Leavis's periodical *Scrutiny* (1932-53).

Poetry: 1920-30

Modernist poetry was inaugurated by Eliot's *Waste Land* in 1922 which is as significant a landmark in English poetry as *The Lyrical Ballads*. In this Eliot uses all his resources of wit, irony, and bathos to produce a horrifying report on the decayed civilisation of Europe. Its symbolist technique and esoteric allusions make it hard reading, and few can honestly say they have understood the whole of it. Its general drift, however, is clear. However bleak the prospect pictured in it, the *Waste Land* is not without gleams of hope of salvation. The process of this salvation is worked out in *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and the *Four Quartets* (1944).

Edith Sitwell is less concrete in her images of modern vulgarity. She sought escape from it in the private paradise of her aristocratic childhood. Though a prominent modernist, her poetry lacks conviction.

The principles underlying modernist poetry have been comprehensively expounded by Eliot in his critical essays.* They may be briefly stated as follows:

(a) Poetry is objective or impersonal. Poetry is not a 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. It is not an expression of personality, rather it is an escape from personality.

(b) Poetry should express 'unified sensibility' i.e., intellect and emotion combined, as in Donne and other Metaphysicals.

(c) Poetry should be symbolist or indirect in statement, but its images should be precise and clear-cut, without any vagueness.

*The theory behind these principles had been propounded by T. B. Hulme who was killed in action in 1917.

(d) Serious poetry need not be solemn. To avoid 'high seriousness' it should combine the serious and the comic. Hence the need to counterpoint the formal with the colloquial, and to use all the resources of irony, wit, paradox, song, clowning, etc.

(e) Poetry should be free from the shackles of metrical regularity. The poet is free to write as he chooses, to adapt his verse to the rhythm of his thought.

The 20's were the most exciting as also the most confused period of English poetry. The furious controversy between the rebels and the traditionalists produced more heat than light. The new poetry became an affair of a coterie. In denouncing Victorian poetry and trumpeting the superiority of the new, this coterie adopted a petulant, arrogant, and vainglorious attitude that only served to irritate many readers. Apart from the fact that this poetry dealt with themes that were unpoetic—steam engines, factories, warehouses, etc.—it expressed complexities of thought and feeling which the readers had never known before. More disconcerting was the language and style of modernist poetry. Forgetting Coleridge, the modernists raised colloquial speech to an absolute, and rejecting the discipline of metre they substituted 'free verse' which has practically abolished the distinction between prose and poetry. Much of the modernist poetry is chopped prose arranged in lines to resemble verse. In the hands of some, poetry became a puerile pastime, as for example, in the eccentricities of Cummings—his typographical designs and 'creative dislocation of grammar' etc.

In the midst of this poetic anarchy the older poets continued to write their poems in the traditional manner. Their major achievements during this decade were Hardy's *Late Lyrics*, Bridges's *Testament of Beauty*, and Yeats's *Tower*. The war and its aftermath—the blundering treaty of Versailles—gave their work a graver tone, but they retained their idealism. Only Hardy struck a note of despair.

1930 to the Present Day

The 30s opened with world-wide economic depression and its attendant ruin and misery. Hitler and Mussolini threatened the political stability of Europe and Japan that of Asia. In the late 30s came the Spanish civil war between communism and fascism. Against this background of gloom arose a group of young poets, all born between 1904 and 1909, and bound together by ties of friendship and similarity of outlook. They were Auden, Lewis, Spender and Macneice. Young, gifted, and keenly sensitive, they came to believe that literature was a futility if not harnessed to a social or political purpose. Marxist in leaning, they saw in Communism a panacea for the world's ills. Auden led the group with his revolt against bourgeois ideals, and they all preached communism through their poems. Their poetry has no intrinsic value. It is journalism, mere political propaganda. Their technique is a continuation of Eliot's in its queer rhythms, contemporary imagery,

and mixture of the serious and the comic. Though disciples of Eliot, they differed from him in important respects. They were left-wing in politics against Eliot's right-wing. Eliot found peace in religion; they denounced religion. Above all, Eliot's verbal austerity was beyond them.

While they were shouting their arguments and rhetoric, came the second World War. The horrible reality of death and doom brought a new awakening. The poets became introspective and brooded upon the mystery of life and death. A new note half romantic, half religious, was struck by Dylan Thomas, a Welsh poet younger than the Auden group. Like them he belonged to the Eliot tradition, and his middle poems are as obscure as any modernist's but his earlier and later poems recall Wordsworth in their pantheism and deep sense of unity of all life and Nature. Though not religious in the formal sense, he also struck a religious note. In a crisis even atheists turn believers. The war and its horrors (remember Hiroshima and Hitler's gas chambers) had created a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. It was natural for people to seek the sanctuary of faith. Dylan Thomas came up with this faith—

And Death shall have no dominion

Dead men shall rise again, Lovers may be lost, not love.
The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.

And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

Dylan Thomas became the leader of this "war-time romanticism" and the chief poet of the 40s. His passionate lyrics had brought emotion back to poetry, which in the hands of Eliot and his followers had become too intellectual.

As the propagandist poetry of this Auden group had lost its appeal and no new school of poetry had arisen after the war, the new romanticism continued and became the mode of the younger poets. The poetic revolution of Eliot had lasted far too long, and the poets as well readers of poetry were sick of it. It had been merely destructive; it had produced little of permanent value. It was time the poets thought of construction.

In this work of construction the English poets were greatly benefited by the example of American poets. While much of English poetry produced during the late 40s was just so much trash, American poetry during the same years had taken long strides forward. The American poets had kept to the traditional ways of poetic discipline—metrical regularity, simple and direct speech. Comradeship in arms had brought the two nations together as never before, and the young English poets were only too willing to learn from their transatlantic brethren. The impact of American poetry

on English poets had a most beneficial effect in the direction of technique. The poets of the 50s and 60s are not only romantic in spirit but also traditional in technique—regular rhythms and simple, direct expression.

To sum up, the communistic poetry of Auden and his associates is on its last legs. Auden went to America in 1939 and became religious; his friends and fellow travellers have become less aggressive. There are as yet no signs of a fresh revolt and the romantic trend continues. Though the future cannot be predicted we may hope that the romantic tradition has returned to stay.

CHAPTER 45

MODERN POETS

Robert Bridges—Kipling—Davies—Walter de la Mare—Masefield—Gibson—Sassoon—Rupert Brooke—Alfred Noyes—Abercrombie—Wilfred Owen—Edmund Blunden—Bottomley—Newbolt—Chesterton and Belloc—Edward Thomas—Monro—Drinkwater—J.C. Squire—Sturge Moore—Charlotte Mew—Ralph Hodgson—Humbert Wolfe—Yeats.

The poets of this period belong, in the main, to the Victorian tradition. Some show mildly anti-traditional symptoms, while some others are bolder in their departure from tradition, especially on the side of verse technique.

It has been found necessary to take some liberties with chronology in the interest of a better perspective on the period. W.B. Yeats, for example, has been placed last in this section to wind up the transitional stage.

Robert Bridges (1844-1930), a doctor and scholar, became poet laureate in 1913 and carried on the Victorian tradition after Tennyson. He theorised on English prosody and tried experiments in metre. He wrote charming lyrics and astonished the poetic world by publishing on his eighty-fifth birthday *The Testament of Beauty* (1929), a long philosophic poem embodying the accumulated wisdom of a long life. Though highly praised at the time it has no great depth. He was the first editor of Hopkins whose *Poems* were published in 1918.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) has a rather dubious reputation as a poet especially among the intellectuals. His enthusiasm for the Empire and his contempt for non-whites ("lesser breeds without the law") account for the Indian prejudice against him. His poems—a combination of army slang and Biblical idiom—have a hearty vigour and vulgarity which appeals to the soldier and the man in the street. Poems like *The Road to Mandalay*, evocative of the sun and colour of the East, awake nostalgic memories in many an Englishman home returned after service in the outposts of the Empire.

Kipling's best verse volumes are: *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892), *The Seven Seas* (1896), *The Five Nations* (1903), *Songs from Books* (1912) and *The Years Between* (1919). The first contains the above

mentioned *Mandalay* and the famous *Ballad of East and West* which has given us the popular quotation: "East is east and West is west, and never the twain shall meet." Eliot's laudatory preface to a recent selection of Kipling's verse and Orwell's endorsement in an essay may have rehabilitated Kipling in the opinion of British intellectuals, but it is doubtful if any voice of authority will dissipate anti-Kipling feeling in India, which is a pity, for Kipling is full of matter. His prose fiction is considered elsewhere.

W.H. Davies (1871-1940) who described himself as a super-tramp (*Autobiography of a Super-tramp*, 1908) wrote delightful poems of the countryside in an extremely simple style. Every schoolboy knows the lines—

What a life if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

(Collected editions 1916, 1918 and *The Poems of W.H. Davies*, 1934)

Walter de la Mare (1873-1956) has a special place among the Georgians, as the creator of an enchanted world of dream—fairies, shadows and silences—which is specially appealing to children, and is not without interest to adults. The delicacy and subtlety of his fairy world defies analysis. In later life he wrote more prose than verse, and his prose is as exquisite and subtle as his verse. The best of his verse volumes are *The Listeners* (1912), *Peacock Pie* (1913), *The Veil* (1921), *Ding-Dong Bell* (1924), *Old Rhymes and New* (1932), and *The Burning Glass* (1945). (Collected Editions 1920, 1942.) His prose stories are *Henry Brocken* (1904), *The Return* (1910), *The Memoirs of a Midget* (1921) and *At First Sight* (1928). He also produced notable criticism in *Rupert Brook and the Intellectual Imagination* (1919), *Desert Islands and Robinson Crusoe* (1930) and *Pleasures and Speculations* (1940). He kept aloof from the modernist controversy and quietly pursued his vocation to the last.

John Masefield (1878-1967), poet laureate after Bridges was another Georgian with the true vocation of a poet. He is specially strong in his narrative poems. The earliest of these *The Everlasting Mercy* (1911), the long story of a sinner's confession and conversion, with its violent language and stark realism made him instantly famous. This success he followed up with other tales in verse: *The Widow in the Bye Street* (1911), *Dauber* (1912), *Lollington Downs* (1917), *Reynard the Fox* (1919), *Enslaved* (1920) and *Right Royal* (1920).

Of these the first two are as sensational in their realism as *The Everlasting Mercy*; the others are quieter in tone, the best being *Reynard the Fox* and *Right Royal*. Other and later verse tales are of the same kind and need not be mentioned. Besides these, Masefield has written delightful short poems in *Salt-water Ballads* (1902) which contains the popular 'Sea Fever' and in *Ballads and Poems* (1910). In criticism his slim volume on *Shakespeare* (1911) is valuable and of his novels and stories the best is *The Bird of Dawning*, a thrilling tale of racing ships. Masefield had been a sailor and had intimate knowledge of the sea. That is why his sea yarns in verse or prose

are so effective. His plays are noticed elsewhere.

Wilfrid Gibson (1878-1962) like Masefield is notable for his stern realism and sympathy for the poor. He began as a Tennysonian but soon moved away to a plain, almost bald and blunt style in *Nets of Love*, *Stonefolds*, *Daily Bread*, *Livelihood*, etc. which describe the hardships of the working classes of his native Northumberland. Lyrical power and a preference for the dramatic form are other distinguishing features of Gibson's narrative poems. His style and matter are reminiscent of Wordsworth and Crabbe.

Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) one of the very few war-poets to attain distinction, is now better known for his autobiographical prose books *Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man* (1928) and *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930). *The Old Huntsman* (1917) and *Counter Attack* (1918) containing short poems attacking the madness of war and its horrors had a wide appeal at the time. Less successful were the later *Satirical Poems* (1926), *The Heart's Journey* (1928) and *Vigil* (1935).

Rupert Brooke (1887-1915), a poet of great promise, became the darling of sentimental readers, especially of university youth, because of the Byronic charm of his personality, his early death in the war and his patriotic sonnet 'The Soldier.' Another popular poem of his is 'Grantchester'. His other poems include 'Heaven' and 'The Great Lover'.

Alfred Noyes (1880-1958), a very popular poet, was disparaged by high-brow critics for his smoothness and fluency. The critics should be ignored and Noyes enjoyed in such volumes as *Forty Singing Seamen* (1907), *A Tale of Old Japan* (1914) and *The Torch Bearers* (1922-30). This last relates the achievements of the great leaders of thought, discoverers and inventors. His other volumes include *The Loom of Years* (1902), *Drake, an English Epic* (1906-8), and *Tales of Mermaid Tavern* (1913).

Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938) departed widely from old techniques and was 'modern' in the full sense of the term both in his subjects and in his style. His frightening matter, artistic austerity and harsh metre have never invited a large audience. The least forbidding of his poetical works is *Emblems of Love* (1912). He has written articles on aesthetics such as the one in the *Outline of Modern Knowledge*. His more valuable contribution has been in the revival of poetic drama.

Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948) belongs with Abercrombie to the history of poetic drama. He also resembles Abercrombie in other respects—in originality, difficulty and emphatic revolt against Victorian techniques. His best work is contained in *Poems of Thirty Years* (1925).

Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) won wide popularity as a 'patriotic' poet by writing, long before the war, a succession of verse-volumes, such as *Admirals All* (1897), *The Island Race*, and *Songs of the Fleet* (1910). Though belonging to the elder school he was 'modern' in appreciating the new or Georgian poetry of which he

compiled an anthology *New Paths on Helicon*.

Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), for many years keeper of prints and drawings at the British Museum, was an art critic and authority on Oriental painting. Of the traditional school, his poetry is marked by classical restraint and choice diction. One of the few war poets whose war poetry endures. The most famous of his war poems is *For the Fallen* (1914). Besides his war poems, his other publications include *London Visions* (1896) and *Porphyryon* (1898).

Wilfrid Owen (1893-1918) was killed in the war and his poems were edited by Siegfried Sassoon and published in 1920. Hailed with Hopkins as a harbinger of modern poetry, Owen showed extraordinary skill and originality in form and metre. *His Strange Meeting* is one of the most moving and memorable poems of the war.

Edmund Blunden (1896-) is also a war poet who has described his hellish experiences of the war in *Undertones of War* (1928). A scholar and critic, he has taught English literature at the universities of Tokyo and Hongkong, and succeeded Robert Graves as Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1966. His researches on the country poet Clare and his biography of Leigh Hunt are his other contributions to literature.

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) and Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953). These two are so commonly spoken of together that they have been nicknamed 'Chesterbelloc'. Both were Catholics with a close similarity in outlook on religion, society, politics, literature and art. Both were versatile and excelled in journalism, essays, novels, criticism as well as in verse. Though they wrote more prose, they put some of their best in their casual verse. Both were humorists—Chesterton with his exuberant, jovial, whimsicality and Belloc with his exquisite touch and restraint. Though modern, both wrote in traditional form.

Chesterton's best serio-comic verse is to be found in *The Wild Knight* (1900), *The Ballad of the White Horse* (1911) and in the delightful *Wine, Water and Song* (1915). A collected edition appeared in 1933. Among his serious poems the best known is *Lepanto* describing the stirring naval battle of that name off the south coast of France (1571). Chesterton was a born journalist and propagandist, and his reckless verse always conceals sanity and wisdom behind his dogmas, prejudices and paradoxes.

Belloc's best humorous verse is contained in *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts* (1896), *More Beasts for Worse Children* (1898), *A Moral Alphabet* (1899) and *Cautionary Tales* (1908). In serious writing some of his best lyrics—charming in their simplicity, music and nostalgic feeling are to be found in his *Sonnets and Verse* (1923).

Edward Thomas (1878-1917) was a promising poet killed in the war. He had been a writer of prose before he turned to verse and his slight contribution to poetry is contained in *Poems* (1917) and *Last Poems* (1918). They are marked by simplicity and a visionary quality suggesting a sense of something remote, afar off.

Harold Monro (1879-1932) had no strong poetical impulse, and his verse volumes *Judas* (1911), *Strange Meetings* (1917), etc. are mediocre. He is better remembered as the founder of "The Poetry Bookshop" (1912) and the periodicals *Poetry Review* (1912) and *The Chapbook* (1919-21) which did a great deal in popularising modern poetry.

John Drinkwater (1882-1937) wrote a good deal of verse in the traditional manner but had little poetic individuality. His poetical publications include *Poems* (1903), *Olton Pools* (1916), *Loyalties* (1918), *Bird in Hand* (1927) and *Summer Harvest* (1933). He has a better showing in prose: two volumes of *Autobiography* and some critical studies. He will be best remembered as a dramatist by his successful play *Abraham Lincoln*.

Sir J.C. Squire (1884-), like Drinkwater, was a man of considerable literary activity most of it journalistic. As a poet he showed a gift of fantasy which gave him a vogue at the time, but has nothing very memorable. His verse includes *Poems and Baudelaire Flowers* (1909), *The Lily of Malud* (1917), *The Moon* (1920), and *Poems* (1926). His fantasy may also be seen in his parodies *Imaginary Speeches*, *Steps to Parnassus* and *Tricks of the Trade*. He is better remembered as founder and editor of *The London Mercury* (1919-34) which encouraged young and unknown poets.

Thomas Sturge Moor (1870-1944), a wood-engraver, art critic and poet, was a class by himself and difficult to categorise. A follower of the classical tradition, his treatment of classical subjects was very 'modern' especially in diction. He is not easy reading, though he has the stuff of poetry in him. His collected edition (1934) contains among others *The Vine-dresser* (1899), *The Gazelles and Medea* (1904), *A Sicilian Idyll* (1911), *Judas* (1923), as well as the earlier dramas or dramatic poems *Aphrodite against Artemis* (1901) and *Absalom* (1903).

Charlotte Mew (1870-1928) now considered one of the best women-poets of this century was little noticed in her life-time. Interest in her was roused after poverty had driven her to suicide. Her poetry is distinguished by simplicity and dark, brooding intensity. (Collected editions: *The Farmer's Wife*, 1915 and *The Rambler* (1929) with a memoir published posthumously.)

Ralph Hodgson (1871-), a promising Georgian who has not lived upto expectations. His slight production is contained in *The Ball*, *The Song of Honour*, *Eve*, expressing his love for animals and all living creatures.

Humbert Wolfe (1885-1940) who did not belong to any movement had real poetic gift which, however, he did not exploit fully. He is remarkable for facility of expression and varied music, but is lacking in force or conviction. He excelled in satire as well as in his translations of French poets. His chief works are: *London Sonnets* (1920), *Shylock reasons with Mr. Chersterton* (1920), *Kensington Gardens* (1924), *Lampoons* (1925), *News of the Devil*, and *Requiem* (1927).

Yeats

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), the greatest Irish poet and one of the greatest figures in modern English poetry, needs more extended notice. Eldest son of a clergyman, he was trained as an artist, but settled down to literature at 21. He moved between Sligo (county Galway) and London where in the 90s he associated with the aesthetes or 'decadents' of the Rhymers' Club. He took a prominent part in the Irish Renaissance or revival of Irish literature and helped to found the Irish National Theatre, better known as the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, for which he wrote many plays on Irish themes. He also joined the Irish freedom movement when the literary revival took a political turn. He fell violently in love with Maud Gonne of the Revolutionary Brotherhood but his proposal for marriage was rejected. Maud married another who was executed after the abortive 1916 Irish rising. He proposed again but was rejected. Then he proposed to Maud's adopted daughter Iseult who also rejected him. After this he married in 1917, and a son and a daughter were born to him. He was senator in the Irish Free State from 1922 to 1928. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. He had no faith in Christianity, but being a mystic of sorts was attracted to Blake whose prophetic books he unsuccessfully tried to systematise. He produced an elaborate system of his own which is equally obscure. He dabbled in theosophy, neo-Platonism, spiritualism and even in magic. Yeats is well known in India as the man who introduced Ravindranath Tagore to Europe. He also wrote a Preface to the English version of the *Gitanjali*.

Yeats wrote poems, plays, and prose in almost equal proportions. Of his prose works the most significant are: *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), *Ideas of Good and Evil* (1903), *Per Amica Silentia Lunae* (1918), *The Trembling of the Veil* (autobiography, 1926). The first of these is a collection of stories and sketches illustrating the mysticism of the Irish, their belief in ghosts, spirits and fairies, etc. The 'Celtic twilight' has since become a general term for the whole of the Irish literary revival of the 90s and early twentieth century.

The collected edition of his plays has 26 plays of which the best are: *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *Deirdre* (1907), *The Green Helmet* (1910), *The Hour Glass*, *A Full Moon in March* (1935).

The collected edition of Yeats's poems is divided into two sections: lyrical and narrative. The narrative and dramatic section is about one-fourth of the entire collection and contains six tales: *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), *The Old Age of Queen Maeve* (1903), *Baile and Aillinn* (1903), *The Shadowy Waters* (1906), *The Two Kings* (1914), *The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid* (1923). The lyrical section consists of twelve collections with the following titles: *Crossways* (1889), *The Rose* (1893), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), *The Seven Woods* (1903), *The Green Helmet and Other Poems* (1910), *Responsibilities* (1914), *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael*

Robartes and The Dancer (1921), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1929), *A Full Moon in March* (1935), *Last Poems* (1940).

Yeats is essentially a lyrical poet; even his narrative poems derive their interest from their lyrical content. Not that he lacks narrative power, in fact he is not far below Morris in this respect. His narratives, however, form a very small portion of his total poetic output, and may conveniently be summarised first before taking up his lyrical works for a more detailed study.

Narrative Poems

The Wanderings of Oisín. King Oisín relates to St. Patrick his sojourn in a fairy paradise where all life is joy, its motto being: "Joy is God and God is Joy". He was lured there by Niamh, daughter of King Aengus. After living there a century, he decided to return home, but on the way he is detained on two enchanted islands; on the first he has to fight a demon for a century, on the second he comes upon a slumbering people (like lotos eaters) with whom he passes another century. At length when he arrives in his native land, he is informed that his people—the Fenians—are dead and in hell where they are tortured by demons as punishment for their lustful and godless life. St. Patrick tells him that he too has lost his soul for dallying with his demon lover (Niamh) and must fast and pray. Oisín defies St. Patrick and says he will go and dwell with Fenians "be they in flames or at feast."

The narrative is in the Spenser-Keats-Morris tradition with its richly embroidered diction and fluent rhymes.

The Old Age of Queen Maeve. Queen Maeve, an old beauty, is noted for her "wisdom that caught fire like the dried flax". Aengus, a famous lover, seeks her help in carrying away Caer, the blue-eyed daughter of Bual. At her commands her grand-children dig up Bual's hill-castle and drive away the spirits thrown up by the earth. Aengus carries away Caer, and the couple come and thank the queen.

Baile and Aillinn. Prince Baile and Princess Aillinn are ideal lovers who are not destined to wed on earth. Aengus the Master lover wishing them to live in his own land among the dead, assumes the shape of a ragged old man and tells each of the other's death. The lovers die heart broken. They become swans and live happily in Aengus's paradise.

The Shadowy Waters. This is a dramatic poem on the subject of undying love. Forgael carries on the trade of piracy, killing men who turn into birds. These birds act as his pilots, leading him, as he thinks, to the land of dead where the ever-living and ever-laughing spirits have promised him love in the immortal fashion. He has a magic harp that subdues the sailors who, tired of robbing and sailing, threaten to kill him. Then comes along a ship of king Iollan

and his queen Dectora. Forgael's sailors kill the king and Forgael makes Dectora fall in love with him. Aibric, Forgael's loyal sailor, sails away in the other ship, leaving Forgael and Dectora to their dreams.

The Two Kings. King Eochaid while out hunting fights a stag who kills his horse. The king overcomes the stag, but when he draws his knife, the stag vanishes.

The king returns to his palace and finds his queen, Edain, sitting like a statue. When questioned she tells him a strange story of how his brother Ardan pined for her love which alone could cure him of his mysterious illness. Upon this she asked Ardan to go to a lonely and empty house of a wood-cutter in the nearby forest and await a friend who would cure him. In the night she went there and found Ardan fast asleep. She tried hard to wake him, but failing and dawn approaching, she left. On her path stood a majestic figure who took her in his arms and asked her to go with him as she had been formerly his wife. He went on to say he lived in a place where nothing fades, not even love. Everybody there, he said, was happy and laughing except he with an empty bed. He argued that her present happiness with Eochaid was temporary, for after death she would return to him whether she would or no; but he couldn't live thirty or forty years waiting until she died and came back to him. To this argument she retorted that the very brevity of her present love and happiness made it the more precious. Thereupon the majestic figure disappeared.

The stag was no other than this other king who had declared his love for Edain through Ardan and his illness.

The Gift of Harun Al-Rashid. Caliph Harun Al-Rashid loved women and changed them every spring; he did not believe in undying love of changeless souls. A philosopher councillor of his believed in undying love—love that knows no change even after death. It was because of such belief that he had not married. The Caliph, therefore, presented to the councillor a beautiful girl who had fallen in love with him in spite of his age because she shared his love of mysterious philosophical speculations. Truly enough, the young bride doted upon his book. One night her sleeping form got up in bed and began to expound to him the cause of his bent shoulders and pale cheeks. She spoke for an hour in a magical sweet voice, discoursing upon marvellous, unheard of truths. It appeared as if a Jinn spoke. In the morning she went about her household work in complete ignorance of her strange behaviour of the preceding night. One night she sleep-walked to the desert and wrote with her finger strange characters on the sand. Her sleep-talking took place twice or thrice a fortnight and though seven years have passed the Councillor dare not tell her the truth for fear of losing her love. She might think that he loved her for the truths she revealed and not for herself. That would be tragic for him. He has studied her strange characters and emblems: they are a new expres-

sion of her intoxicating beauty. He has plucked out the heart of the mystery he has been trying to solve all his life. And it is this—

A woman's beauty is a star-tossed banner,
Under it wisdom stands

The Caliph's stand is vindicated. To vary Omar Khayyam's line a little—'Ah! take the present and let the future go.'

Lyrical Poems

The complex personality of Yeats has many facets, and his evolution as a poet shows three more or less clearly marked phases. The first phase is represented by such poems of 'the Celtic twilight' as *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), *The Rose* (1893), and *The Wind among the Reeds* (1899). the second phase is represented by *The Seven Woods* (1904), *The Green Helmet* (1910), *Responsibilities* (1914), *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), and *Michael Robertes and the Dancer* (1921), and the third phase by *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair* (1933), *A Full Moon in March* (1935) and *Last Poems* (1936-39).

The First Phase: *Crossways*, *The Wanderings of Oisín*, *The Rose*, *The Wind among the Reeds*.

Crossways. Though published the same year as *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889), this collection consists of poems written before Yeats was 20. The poems are characterised by romantic prettiness and include pastoral songs, fairy songs, love songs as well as some Indian themes.

The Rose. The Rose is the symbol of beauty, but as Yeats in a note says it is not the same as the Intellectual Beauty of Spenser and Shelley. He says he imagined it as suffering with man and hints that it was rather a vision of his neglected soul. The central poem is the *Rose of the World*, whose theme is physical beauty—beauty of Helen and of Deirdre. For Helen was Troy burnt and for Deirdre died the sons of Usna.

'Cuchulain's fight with the Sea'. Cuchulain the bravest knight of the court of king Conchubar, unwittingly killed his own son. The king fearing his rage might fall upon him and his courtiers, asked his Druid priests to chant magical delusions in Cuchulain's ear, as a result of which he on arising from his grieving fit fought with the waves of the sea.

'The Ballad of Father Gilligan'.

Father Gilligan, too exhausted to visit a sick parishioner, fell asleep in his chair. The man died, and when Father Gilligan hurried to his house next morning he was surprised to learn that the man had died in perfect peace an hour after his visit—a visit that he had not made. God had sent an angel in his place to comfort the dying man.

'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. This famous lyric was written in 1890 inspired by Thoreau's *Walden*. Yeats dreamed of living alone in search of peace and wisdom. The island is in Lough Gill, county Sligo.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow.

The Wind among the Reeds. Most of the lyrics in this volume are in honour of the poet's beloved. The best of these is 'He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven'—

I would spread the cloths under your feet,
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

'The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart'

All ugly things wrong the Rose in his heart, viz. the beloved's image.

'The Cap and Bells'. The lover, a jester (who is usually equipped with cap and bells) sends through the beloved's window, first his soul arrayed in blue garment, and then his heart in purple. When the beloved takes no notice of these, he leaves his cap and bells where she would pass by. These she embraced, and opened her door and window. In went the heart and soul—the heart to her right hand, the soul to left.

'The Fiddler of Dooney'. The Fiddler has a brother and a cousin both of them priests. He says that when after death the three will appear before the gate of Heaven, St. Peter (keeper of the gate) will call him first, because the good and saintly love merriment—singing and dancing.

With the exception of *Crossways* the poems of the early 'twilight' deal with Irish myths and legends expressed in a highly decorative diction and rich music, showing the unmistakable influence of the pre-Raphaelites. Their emotion is simple and spontaneous.

The Second Phase: *The Seven Woods*, *The Green Helmet* *Responsibilities*, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*.

In the second phase the poet emerged from the mythical twilight to the day-light of contemporary Ireland. The romantic beauty and eerie mystery of the 'twilight' is replaced by a more personal and realistic world. Irish character, Irish landscape, Irish speech and Irish politics now claim his attention. Though as ardent a nationalist as any he became unpopular with Irish nationalists for his sponsoring Synge's comedy *A Playboy of the Western World* (1907) which they thought was a slur on the national character. Enraged by this philistinism he attacked them with savage satire in a poem in which

he calls the detractors of *A Playboy* eunuchs of hell who stare upon Don Juan's 'sinewy thigh'. He attacks the philistines again in *To a Shade* for their grudging and parsimonious contributions for a picture gallery to house Sir Hugh Lane's paintings. His attitude towards his imitators is that of lofty contempt. Refusing a brother-poet's request to praise them he says: 'But was there ever dog that praised his fleas?' In *A Coat* he does not mind if the embroidered Coat of his early mythological poems has been stolen by his imitators. It is more enterprise for his song, he says, to walk naked.

This new note of hardness, and irony and satire struck in *The Seven Woods* is progressively intensified in the succeeding poems of this period—*The Green Helmet*, *Responsibilities*. Disillusionment with the Irish nationalists, his defeatism, and his frustrations in love, are their dominant themes. He bewails the lack of heroism in the Irish in *September 1913*, and his own loss of poetic fire in *The Fascination of What's Difficult*. The latter poem also voices his impatience with the whole theatrical business—with 'plays that have to be set up in fifty ways' as well as with management of men, the daily wrangling with 'every knave and dolt'. This defeatism is still more strongly expressed in *All Things Can Tempt Me*. He is so disgusted with 'this craft of verse' that anything can tempt him away from it—a woman's face, or worse—The seeming needs of my fooldriven land.'

As regards his frustrations in love it is remarkable that though twice rejected by Maud Gonne, Yeats was at no time embittered against her. On the other hand, his admiration of her never abated. She is uppermost in his mind in *The Seven Woods*: 'Never Give all the Heart' 'O Do Not Love Too Long' as well as in *The Green Helmet*: 'No Second Troy' and several others. In the otherwise bitter *Responsibilities* she is celebrated in 'Fallen Majesty', and in *The Wild Swans at Coole* which is reminiscent, she receives Yeats's tribute of admiration, love, worship in 'Her Praise' 'His Phoenix' and 'Broken Memories'. The last named is perhaps the most poignant, the most moving expression, of disappointed love in modern poetry.

Saddened though he certainly was by his experiences Yeats did not become morose. He never lost his native gaiety as is evidenced by his frank and unabashed enjoyment of the bawdy jokes of the beggars ('The Three Beggars' 'Beggar to Beggar cried') and the fanciful humour of 'An Appointment' in praise of the jolly Squirrel (*Responsibilities*). In fact, as the later poems show, his Muse grew gayer and gayer as he advanced in years. His only regret was lost youth and its delights of love. "The living Beauty is for younger men." The heart is grown old but not the desire. This is a constant theme running through *The Wild Swans* and the volumes that followed.

The volume called *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) belongs both by chronology and by context to the middle period. The title poem is symbolic-serio-comic. It is a dialogue between Michael Robartes (a philosopher friend of Yeats) and a beautiful dancing girl. He explains

to her the meaning of the figures carved on the altar-piece. The philosopher is of course the mouthpiece of Yeats.

The dragon in the altar-piece which the knight is trying to kill is 'thought'—thought which perplexes his lady love. The idea is that a beautiful woman rules by the supernatural right of her body. The lover cares for her body and can dispense with thought or philosophy. The dancer's beauty is enough; she need not go to college. Beautiful women are blessed souls and in blessed souls soul and body are one. These blessed souls can lead men to like blessedness.

Other notable poems in this collection are 'Easter 1916', 'The Leaders of the Crowd', 'The Second Coming', 'A Prayer for My Daughter'. In 'Easter 1916' the poet remembers friends and companions who died for Ireland in the Easter Rising. 'The Leaders of the Crowd' is a bitter criticism of mob leaders who do not know that truth flourishes in solitude and not in noisy streets. 'The Second Coming' is prophetic in its ironical condemnation of degenerate times which were to bring about a ghastly war. A rough beast (and not Christ) is going to be born in Bethlehem. 'A prayer for My Daughter' reflects the poet's love of aristocratic customs and courtesies: "How but in custom and ceremony/Are innocence and beauty born?"

Before passing on to the last phase of Yeats's development, some remarks may be made on the style of the poems just considered. With his emergence from the cloudlands of Irish mythology, Yeats found himself in the vortex of practical life. The formal, highly ornamental diction and stylised rhythms of the fairy stories gave place to plain, colloquial speech and flexible rhythms. The note of hardness and satire in these poems has already been noticed. A more significant change was compression of style which is associated with the Pound-Eliot axis, omission of the relative, of punctuation marks, etc. Beginning with *The Green Helmet* it became more marked in *Responsibilities*. Symbolism was in the air. These two together make some of Yeats's later poems difficult to follow. The 'Phases of the Moon' in *The Wild Swans*, for example, is utterly incomprehensible. Yeats's mystic vision, it appears, was a very private and intricate affair which he could not communicate. To that extent much of his symbolist poetry is sterile.

The Last Phase: *The Tower*, *The Winding Stair*, *A Full Moon in March*, *Last Poems*.

The appearance in 1928 of *The Tower* made Yeats, at one bound, the greatest of Irish poets and the most distinguished figure in modern English literature. His later publications *The Winding Stair* and *Last Poems* confirmed the verdict. These volumes are marked by a radical change in inspiration as well as art. The inspiration is deeper and jollier and the verse more vibrant, glowing and terse. Realism remains but is now crossed by symbolism and 'metaphysical' elements. They embody the poet's mature philosophy—such philosophy, that is, as he was capable of. This qualification is necessary, for the over-all impression of his work leaves no room

for doubt that Yeats was not cut out for high philosophy or wisdom. Lured though he was by Blake and other mystics, he at no time seems to have achieved a coherent vision of reality which is the quest of the mystic. Plato and Plotinus are brought in here and there only to be contemptuously rejected. The philosophy of Berkeley, his compatriot, is similarly dismissed as nonsense. The more serious attempts at exposition—'Phases of the Moon' and 'Epilogue to *A Vision*'—do little to enlighten. The first is obscure and the second, which describes the soul's journey through the moon, the sun, etc. is a half-understood or muddled version of some Indian sect far from the mainstream of Vedantic mysticism. His 'Supernatural Songs' are metaphysical blasphemies.

Nevertheless, it is clear, Yeats was in search of a principle that would resolve the basic duality of the universe: life and death, body and soul, night and day, pleasure and pain, transient and permanent, etc. Search for something permanent, something that is not subject to change and decay, is the motivation of the two Byzantium poems. In 'Sailing to Byzantium' the poet's spirit escapes from life to the undying realm of art symbolised by Byzantium. In 'Byzantium' he reaches the golden palace of emperor on a dolphin's back, but the golden smithies of the emperor 'break the flood'; passion comes flooding back. Art is no solution to the conflict between time and timeless, between body and spirit, between the sensual and the spiritual. Art itself is based on life, on nature. As he says in 'Ego, Dominus Tuus': 'art is but a vision of reality'; not reality itself. It's no use subduing the body to the spirit, for body after all is the base of the spirit. The two are inseparable: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" ('Among School-children'). He realized he was earth-bound and found his reality in the body. 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul' is conclusive on the point. Soul shows him a glimpse of heaven where everything is forgiven, but Self plumps for life with all its trials, temptations and transgressions. As for forgiveness, he would "forgive myself the lot!"

So the poet hugged a pagan philosophy of life, that of yielding to the urges of the flesh. There is no other heaven but the breast of a woman. There is no room here for Shelley's intellectual beauty or platonic love. He has made his peace, he says, with Greek and Italian artists and poets and memories of women's love (*The Tower*). He rejects Christianity and adopts Homer 'and his unchristened heart' as his example ('Vacillation' in *The Winding Stair*).

The basic fact of Yeats's make-up explains the predominance of the sex *motif* in his later poems and its naked manifestation in many of the obscenities of expression into which he was betrayed. They are unquotable here, but the curious reader may find them in the 'Crazy Jane' pieces of *The Winding Stair* and in 'The Three Bushes' of *Last Poems*.

With the view, perhaps, of disarming criticism, Yeats in a note explains that these poems were written in a mood of exultation

after an illness. Exultation may excuse the frivolities, but not the obscenities of these pieces. So obsessed indeed is he with sex that he does not spare even the Godhead in whom he did not believe. There can be no objection to Godhead begetting Godhead as an abstract conception, but to reduce it as he does, to gross, material terms is to betray morbid imagination ('Supernatural Songs' in *A Full Moon in March*).

Wisdom is the distillation of experience and Yeats's highest wisdom seems to consist in the release of sexual passion. "Wisdom", he says epigrammatically, "is the property of the dead" and "power... the property of the living" ('Blood and the Moon'). Like D.H. Lawrence, he glorifies animality. He does not mind if he appears 'for the song's sake a fool'. On the other hand, he prays that he may die old "a foolish, passionate man." ('A Prayer for Old age' in *A Full Moon in March*.)

Apart from this wisdom of the body, the poet's other values are pride, aristocratic grace, artistic perfection and dignified gaiety. Pride of his brand is the pride of "upstanding men" who are not wedded to any Cause or State, or to anything but their own integrity—men who "Come Proud, open-eyed and laughing to the tomb". ('The Tower' and 'Vacillation'). Yeats's love of aristocratic luxury must undoubtedly have developed from his visits to Coole Park, the country seat of Lady Augusta Gregory. He did not like the bourgeoisie and would be either an aristocrat or a beggar. The preference for aristocratic elegance already revealed in 'A Prayer for My Daughter' is repeated through many of the later poems notably in the two Coole Park poems (*The Winding Stair*) and in 'Meditations in time of Civil War' (*The Tower*). The alternative ideal of beggary is emphatically declared in 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited' (*Last Poems*). The sole test, he says of his writing, as that of Synge and Lady Gregory has been that it should be about the sons of the soil—Irish soil, viz. "Dream of the noble and the beggar-man." He insists on artistic perfection, 'profane perfection of mankind' as the ideal for all artists whether they be poets, painters, or sculptors. Among the models he mentions are Phidias and Michaelangelo. He pours scorn on the shapeless modernist poetry so much in fashion in his day ('Ben Bulbin' in *Last Poems*).

In the very first poem of *The Tower*, Yeats says that an old man is a mere scare-crow unless he is gay and gets gayer and gayer with advancing years. Realising perhaps that he had been too gay in some of his later poems (which we have condemned for their lewdness), he defends gaiety as good sense even in the midst of the most tragic circumstances. This is the theme of 'Lapis Lazuli' (*Last Poems*). In this poem, however, he modifies the ideal to one of restrained or dignified gaiety. Three Chinamen, one of them a servant carrying a musical instrument, carved in lapis lazuli (blue stone) are seen climbing a mountain and looking up towards a half-way house. But for a plum or cherry tree in the half-way house the prospect is bleak with snows all round. The poet imagines that sitting there and

staring at the desolate and depressing scene, one of the Chinamen asks for a mournful melody and the servant begins to play upon his instrument. They are old with wrinkled faces, but their eyes are gay. An impending air raid that may flatten the town is no reason for becoming hysterical. Undaunted, poets, painters, and musicians should go on with their work in a spirit of gaiety.

Quite a large portion of Yeats's later poetry is filled with autobiographical matter. In *The Tower* the poet is at the top of his form. He had built his house in the neighbourhood of Coole Park and the tower of his house he made the symbol of Anglo-Irish tradition which linked him with Swift, Goldsmith, Burke and Berkley. He recalls the old memories of the site on which the house was built, and describes his ancestors, his descendants, his table, etc. with great gusto. He recalls the scenes of butchery and bloodshed enacted near his house during the civil war and laments the vanished glory of rich ancestral houses. In the first of the two 'Coole Park' poems he pays a noble tribute to Lady Gregory for her patronage of poets, scholars and artists. In the second he mourns the passing away of old grace and glory with the death of Lady Gregory and the sale of Coole Park to the forest department. A pretty pendent to these reminiscences is Yeats's tribute of admiration for Anne Gregory, Lady Gregory's daughter, whom only God could love for herself and not for her golden hair ('For Anne Gregory').

Among the miscellaneous poems the most noteworthy are 'Mother of God', 'Stream and Sun at Glendalough', 'Lullaby' (*The Winding Stair*). Though not a Christian, Yeats could write feelingly of Christ, as he does in 'Mother of God'. *Stream and Sun* illustrates the infectious gaiety of Nature, reminiscent of Wordsworth's 'Lucy' poems. 'Lullaby' is lovely in its felicitous assemblage of images of peaceful sleep: Paris in the arms of Helen, Tristram after the potion had taken effect, and the swan from exhaustion, after he had landed Leda.

The slight volume called *A Full Moon in March* (1935) is devoted partly to Irish politics, denunciation of those Irish who were responsible for Parnell's death, lack of leadership and its consequences, etc. and partly to metaphysical reflections or speculations which are hard to follow. Besides these, only two pieces deserve mention: 'Meru' and 'A Prayer for Old Age'. The first is a philosophical reflection on the transience of civilisations—a truth that hermits on mount Meru (मेरु पर्वत) know. The second has already been considered.

The Last Poems, a posthumous publication, is a mixed bag containing a miscellaneous assortment of poems autobiographical, political, satirical, and sensual. The purely sensual poems or rather the more objectionable of them have been considered above. Only a few of the others deserve notice. 'Long-legged Fly': The idea is that perfection is achieved only in solitude or silence. Examples: Caesar's military planning, Helen's innocent grace, Michaelangelo's art. 'The Circus Animal's Desertion': In this the poet reviews his life's work—his early fairy poems, his plays, etc.

'The Spur': In this little poem of four lines the poet says he has nothing else but lust and rage to spur him into song. 'Why Should Not Old Men Be Mad': In this the poet rages against the ironies of life: that good men should starve and wicked men be prosperous; that a promising strong-wristed boy should grow up to be a drunken journalist; that a cultured girl who knew all Dante should end up as the wife of a dunce; that a beautiful woman should become a screaming social reformer; that no one knows unbroken happiness.

The last poem of this collection ends with his epitaph—

Cast a cold eye
On life, on death
Horseman, pass by!

To sum up, Yeats evokes a feeling which is a mixture of fascination and disillusion. One is fascinated by the simple and spontaneous emotion of his early twilight poems as by their romantic, fairy beauty. The combination of romantic vision and realism, of exultation and rage, in his later poems is no less pleasing. His power of expression has not been equalled by any modern poet. He absorbed all the influences working in poetry in his time—pre-Raphaelitism, symbolism, realism, metaphysicalism—but except in his early poems he was never an echo poet. He was always himself—in thought as in style. His imagery, especially, is strikingly individual and original. 'Maud Gonne's beauty was 'like a tightened bow';

The stallion Eternity
Mounted the mare of Time
'Get the foal of the world.

Undeniable as these excellences are, they are considerably qualified by the poet's immaturity of thought. He seems to have thought like a child. His mysticism is mere moonshine. As regards wisdom or philosophy of life, he has nothing better to offer than cheap paganism. He had no higher inspiration for his song than lust and rage. That he should rage against old age because he could no longer hold a girl in his arms is amusing enough, but that he should get mad over life's little ironies is astonishing.

Indeed, in one who wrote 'Lapis-lazuli' and that epitaph of his, both of which idealise dignified bearing in the face of tragedy, such lack of courage and understanding seems incredible. No other poet of comparable merit, except Swinburne, can be placed beside Yeats in respect of poverty of thought. He failed to solve the riddle of life as he failed to resolve his inner conflict—the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Keats was also attached to the flesh, and though he died at the age of 26 he had a glimpse of reality when he identified Beauty with Truth. Yeats, who died at 74, had no such revelation, no harmonious vision of life. He did not achieve an integrated personality.

CHAPTER 46

MODERNIST POETS

Hopkins — Housman — Ezra Pound — T.S. Eliot — The Sitwells — W.H. Auden—Cecil Day Lewis—Stephen Spender—Louis Macneice.

The emergence of ultra-modern or 'modernist' poetry in the 20s from a mixture of the old and the new was a phenomenon, which at this distance of time does not appear as important or exciting as it did at the time. The revolutionary movement in poetry headed by Ezra Pound and Eliot, and later carried on by Auden and his group, disintegrated after the second World War.

Gorard Manley Hopkins (1844-89), educated at Balliol College, Oxford, was a child of the Oxford Movement and embraced Roman Catholicism in 1866. Two years later, in 1868, he became a Jesuit priest and in 1884 was appointed Professor of Classics at the University of Dublin. As his poems were experiments in an entirely new technique, he did not publish them but sent them to his friend Robert Bridges. The latter published a few of these in anthologies and magazines, and encouraged by the interest aroused by them published a collection in 1918. Hopkin's technique fascinated the younger generation of poets who found in it a confirmation of their own unconventional tastes. In 1930 appeared the second edition with some additional poems and an introduction by Charles Williams. A third edition, with more additional poems and fragments, prepared by D.H. Gardner appeared in 1948. While the first edition took nearly a dozen years to exhaust, the second was reprinted nine times, and the third and latest has been through seven impressions by 1970. These details trivial in themselves, show the enormous vogue of Hopkins among the modern poetic enthusiasts. To these may be added the publication (1935-38) of his letters, journal, and notebooks, which have added considerably to our knowledge of his character, attainments and specially his poetic intentions and technique. Though chronologically a Victorian, Hopkins rightly belongs to the 'modern' period. On his first becoming known he was hailed by his perservid admirers as the most original and the greatest of English poets. The 'Hopkins cult' has become stale now

and it is possible to take a juster and saner view of his poetry.

It may be stated at the outset that the omission of Hopkins's earlier poems, say those written between 1860 and 1875, from the first edition was a serious error of judgement. As it was, the critics and reviewers of the 1918 edition were confronted with the poems of the poet's maturity (1876-89) which were written in a new technique discovered by him. Of these they could make nothing. They were cried up by the enthusiasts just for this reason. The early poems, twenty-seven in the latest edition, put an altogether different complexion on the poet. They are all of them traditional in manner, some of them showing unmistakable influence of Keats, Byron, and Swinburne. Indeed, the two sets of poems—early and late—are poles apart from each other. As in the case of Patmore, they appear to have been written by two different poets. The earlier pieces are marked by a child-like simplicity which is worlds away from the childish intricacy of the later.

The dominant spirit of these early poems is devotional, but secular interests like Nature, Art, and Love are not neglected. The description of the solemn grandeur of the palace of the *Escorial* is faintly reminiscent of Byron's *Childe Harold*. Keatsian or pre-Raphaelite aestheticism may be seen in the luxurious description of the mermaids (*A Vision of the Mermaids*); and the delicate fancy of such a love poem as *The Beginning of the End* recalls the Caroline lyrists. The lover's love has declined, has grown less—

But ah! if you could understand how then
That less is heavens higher even yet
Than treble-fervent more of other men,
Even your unpassioned eyelids might be wet.

The devotional poems are an interesting mixture of delight in Nature and love of God. *Ad Mariam* in praise of the month of May (Spring's daughter) is Swinburnian in both its luscious style and its music. *Rosa Mystica* explains the mystery of the rose. That mystery is none other than Virgin Mary. The blossom on Mary, the rose tree, was Christ, her son. His colour was immaculate white but it took crimson colouring on the Cross. The most notable of the devotional poems, however, are *Half-way House*, *Nondum*, and *The Habit of Perfection*. The idea of the *Half-way House* is that human love is the ladder by which man ascends to divine love. In other words, human love is the half-way house in our journey to heaven and divine in love. In *Nondum* the poet addresses God that hides himself (based on a verse from *Isiah*). *The Habit of Perfection* extols asceticism, and shows the superiority of heavenly over earthly delights. The habit (dress) of a perfect being, of a self-realized person, is renunciation.

In 1868, Hopkins entered the society of Jesus (the order of Jesuits) and gave up writing poetry as an earthly vanity. This self-denial continued for seven years and was broken at the instance of his

superior, who expressed a wish that some one would write a poem on the disaster that had overtaken a German ship in the mouth of the Thames in December 1875. Hopkins undertook the writing and *The Wreck of the Deutschland* was the result (1876). The ship bound for America was carrying two hundred emigrants including five exiled Franciscan nuns. Driven by a sudden blizzard, it struck a sandbank and was crippled. The vessel was lashed by the storm throughout the night, and no rescue reaching her about fifty people including the nuns were drowned. In the midst of the tumult and terror of the night was heard a nun's cry calling, 'O Christ, Christ, Come quickly'.

The rest of the poem is the poet's elucidation of the meaning of that cry. He sees it as the symbol of faith and hope. Man is saved through suffering and sacrifice of which Christ's Passion on the cross is symbolic. The poem begins and ends with praise of God's majesty and mercy.

The above is a bare gist. The poem defies paraphrase. Mr. Gardner has supplied a synopsis to which the more curious readers are referred for a fuller rendering.

Breaking the silence with *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, Hopkins continued writing till the end of his life. The total number of his later or mature poems (1876-89) is 48. They are all written in the new metre which he calls 'Sprung rhythm' and which, he says in a letter to Canon Dixon, had haunted his ear for some time before he entered upon his second poetic career which opened with *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. It is significant that he was not unaware of the risk he was taking. In the above-mentioned letter he says that because of his strange metre 'and a great many other oddnesses' the magazine *The Month* to which he offered *The Wreck* 'dared not print it'. The other oddnesses examined in detail by Bridges, the first editor, cumulatively amount to obscurity with a capital O. In his letters to Bridges he explained that he holds back the meaning until the end, when as result of repeated readings it ultimately 'explodes' and is made clear. He didn't want to make the meaning plain piecemeal, but waited for it to emerge fully after the whole poem had made its impact on the reader's understanding. He thought this an excellence "higher than clearness at first reading." No wonder his imitators in the 20s and 30s revelled in this 'excellence'. He said he aimed at what he calls 'inscape', his unique inner experience, his distinctive individuality. And to be 'distinctive' according to him was to be 'queer'.

Nor is this all. He has placed so many other hurdles in the path of understanding, such as, excessive compression, topsy-turvy word order, giving familiar words strange meanings, reviving unfamiliar and obsolete words, unheard-of compound words, habitual omission of relative pronoun, and other liberties with grammar. Such monstrosities as "Fresh-firecoal chestnuts falls" (*Pied Beauty*), 'dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon' (*The Windhover*), 'mealed-with yellow-sallows' (*The Starlight Night*), 'Sadden-with-its sorrow heart' (*The*

Wreck of the Deutschland), 'Miracle-in-Mary-of flame' (*The Wreck of the Deutschland*) would have made Carlyle gasp.

His invention of a new metre was even more daring. This was based on his theory that the normal pattern of English verse is trochaic (—) and dactylic (—). Thus was born his 'Sprung rhythm', which enabled him to take unprecedented liberties with normal English metre. Its most obvious feature is strong, crowded accentuation, eked out by alliteration, assonance, and internal rhyme:

Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmed, lark-charmed,
rook-racked, river-rounded;

To say that it is a reversion to old English rhythm is an oversimplification, for it is too complex to be merely that. To discuss its intricacies here would be giving it an importance it does not deserve. Its technique and appreciation is better left to Hopkins disciples. For those not of the fraternity it is enough to know that its chief distinction, as that of everything else about Hopkins, lies in its singularity.

Not all the later poems, however, are written in Sprung rhythm. Some like *Penmaen Pool*, *The Sea and Skylark*, *Pied Beauty*, *God's Grandeur*, *Binsey Poplars*, *Spring*, *Felix Randal* are either in normal rhythm or in a mixture of normal and Sprung rhythms. And it is significant that such poems are generally quite easy and intelligible. Hopkins's admirers, however, hold up for special admiration such poems as *The Windhover*, *The Candle Indoors* and *The Starlight Night* whose only distinction is their obscurity or wild imagery or both. As is usual with Hopkins, these three sonnets are adorations of God through Nature. In *The Windhover* the beauty and vigour of the Falcon, the 'dauphin' of the Kingdom of dawn, reminds the poet of the infinitely greater loveliness of Christ the King. In *The Candle Indoors* a candle burning inside a cottage puts the poet in mind of the beauty of everyday things and fills his heart with gratitude to God. He wonders who the cottager may be—a man or woman working by the candle light. *The Starlight Night* is an appreciation of the beauty of the stars, 'the fire-folk sitting in the air'. Their clusters are 'the bright boroughs, the circle—citadels' which house Christ, his mother and all the saints. These are glimpses of the meaning one gets after repeated readings. If the full meaning 'explodes' at the end, the explosion is heard only by the initiated. In *The Candle Indoors* occurs the much-ridiculed line—'Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye.'

This is supposed to describe the soft candle light moving respectfully or submissively (truckle), to and from the eye like the shining tramlines on a wet night.

Bridges calls such extravagancies 'artistic wantonness'. Among the examples cited by him is one where the hills are 'as a stallion stalwart very-violet sweet' (*Hurrahing in Harvest*). He is more severe in his condemnation of the poet's lapses from good taste, such as

'the Holy Ghost, with warm breast and with ah! bright wings' (*God's Grandeur*). The examples he cites of atrocious rhymes are nothing as compared with the following from *The Loss of the Eurydice*—

he rhymes with electric
Or rhymes with snowstorm
to rhymes with unvisited

Formidable as the list of his defects is, they should not blind us to the poetic power of Hopkins. This is nowhere more impressively shown than in the handful of 'terrible sonnets' (so called by Bridges) he wrote during the last four or five years of his life. They are indeed terrible in their pathos. After his appointment to the chair of classics at Dublin in 1884 his constitutional melancholy became so acute that he found himself unable to do any sustained or worthwhile work. To say nothing of the luxury of poetry, he couldn't discharge even his professional duties properly. It is this sense of frustration and disappointment that is voiced in these sonnets. In utter desolation of spirit he calls himself 'Time's eunuch', and prays God to 'send my roots rain'. (No.74, last but one).

To sum up, the fact that the latest editor of Hopkins doesn't agree with the first editor in many of the latter's castigations of the poet is symptomatic. Critical opinion is divided between those who regard Hopkins as a master innovator of poetic technique and those who look upon him as an unfortunate accident. It is also important to remember that it is the technique of Hopkins's verse and not its content—its mysticism—that has attracted his followers. He is not a great but a considerable poet. His earlier poems have tilted the balance in his favour and these together with a dozen of his later pieces should survive.

A. E. Housman (1859-1936), Professor of Latin, first at London and then at Cambridge University, was a tragic poet like Hardy, but out-did him in railing against 'whatever brute and blackguard made the world'. In spite of this cynicism he found great physical beauty in that world. He won public attention by his *Shropshire Lad* (1896) to which were added two more volumes of verse (1922, 1936). (Lad in rustic dialect means man.) Housman's continued popularity is due principally to the singing quality of his verse. Another attraction is the studied simplicity of his words, which he uses with the greatest economy. All these qualities are illustrated in the following little poem—

Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries

These, in the days when heaven was falling,
The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Follow'd their mercenary calling
And took their wages and are dead.
Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
They stood and earth's foundations stay:

What God abandon'd, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.

Though the general cast of his poetry is tragic, some of his pastoral poems have lighter touches. An example is the poem entitled *Is My Team Ploughing?* A dead man asks his living friend about the condition of his field, the football game, his sweetheart and finally the friend himself. To these queries the friend gives satisfying answers. The answer to the last query whether his friend 'has found to sleep in/A better bed than mine?' the answer is—

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

Ezra Pound (1885-1972), American poet and scholar who devoted his life to enriching civilisation by producing good literature. According to him the bane of modern civilisation is its craze for money. His cure for the world's ills is to outlaw investment and usury. He lived in England, France, Italy, Spain and China and produced excellent translations of Provencal, French, Latin, Italian and Chinese poets. In 1945, he was arrested on a charge of treason for making anti-American broadcasts over Rome radio. He did not deny the charge and was consigned to a lunatic asylum. Released in 1959, he went back to Italy where he lived with his daughter.

As a leader of modernist poetry he propounded the 'imagist' theory and brought out his imagist anthology in 1914. Abandoning imagism, he devoted himself to writing his *Cantos* or verse-chapters, his greatest work running to 800 pages. In 'Usura', the title of his canto on usury, he condemns the commercialisation of art. Art, he says, is being produced for quick sale. The 'Usura' reads like chopped prose. Pound's poetry is individual in its combination of lyricism and common speech.

T. S. Eliot

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1968), an American of a New England family, was educated at Harvard, Paris, and Oxford. He married in 1915, settled in England, and adopted British citizenship in 1922. After working in Lloyd's Bank for a brief period he became a director of the publishing firm of Faber and Faber and held that office till his death. The collected edition of his poems contains, besides minor pieces, the following: *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917), *Poems* (1920), *The Waste Land* (1922), *Hollow Men* (1925), *Ash Wednesday* fragmentary (1930), *Ariel Poems* (1927-30), *Choruses from 'The Rock'* (1934), *Four Quartets* (1935-42). His important literary criticism is contained in *Selected Essays* (1932) and *On Poetry and Poets* (1957). His plays are considered elsewhere. He was invested with the Order of Merit (O.M.) in 1948 and the same year received the Nobel Prize for literature.

Eliot, like Hopkins, is not everybody's cup of tea. Like Hopkins, he was acclaimed in his time as an audacious 'modern', the modernity consisting in incomprehensibility of matter and eccentricity of manner. If anything, Eliot makes tougher demands on the reader than Hopkins. The earlier poems of the latter are quite enjoyable, and of his later poems 'the terrible sonnets' are impressive in their pathos. Nothing in Eliot is either enjoyable or impressive in the ordinary sense. The earlier poems are banal and the later poems, with the possible exception of *The Rock*, are riddles whose key is only in the mind of the author.

Incomprehensibility is unfortunately often equated with profundity. There is, however, nothing profound in Eliot but only a great show of profundity, by means of profuse quotations from and allusions to a wide range of authors, both European and Oriental. The greatest influence on him was Dante; other influences were St. John of the Cross, Jacobian dramatists, the Metaphysicals, French symbolists Baudelaire and La Fourge, and the *Bhagvad Geeta*. He had a strong historical sense and believed in the continuity of the past. This makes him traditional—in a special sense. A traditional writer, according to Eliot, develops tradition and does not slavishly adopt either traditional outlook or traditional literary conventions. The way in which he has developed tradition makes him both too traditional and too novel. His poetry is a mosaic of many writers—his own contribution or development of their themes being almost negligible.

Every Eliot poem is headed by an epigraph or motto in Greek, Italian, French, etc. whose connection with the theme is not always clear. In the text of the poem there are other quotations and allusions—single lines, phrases, or merely words. Apart from this allusiveness, there are other tricks of style which add to the obscurity. The most serious of these is a general obliqueness of manner. Except in *The Rock* nothing is explicit or direct. Other hurdles are esoteric symbolism, absence of logical sequence, excessive use of paradox, exaggerated phrasing, extreme compression and omission of grammatical links and punctuation marks. The difficulties, indeed, in the path of the reader's understanding are formidable.

Eliot's verse technique has considerable variety. He has used stanza forms, as well as rhymes, but his distinctive form is a kind of free verse based on loose blank verse. Now and then it has a rhythm which is subtle and flexible, but in general it is hardly distinguishable from prose. One of the so-called poems in the 1920 volume—*Hysteria*—is frank prose.

Eliot, a conscious and deliberate classicist, believed that poetry should be impersonal. The poet's personal experience is no doubt there, but it is personal experience that has incorporated the experience of the age. If it is merely private and personal, it has no poetic significance. It must be generalised, universalised experience. That is why Eliot's poetry is rarely lyrical. The cast of most of his poems is dramatic. Poetry according to him is not what Words-

worth thought it to be—a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. He falls foul of the romantics who revelled in uncontrolled emotion. A poet, according to Eliot, should express a unified sensibility—sensibility, that is to say, which is an integration of emotional and intellectual elements. He praises Donne and others of the Metaphysical school who achieved this synthesis and castigates all other English poets including Milton.

As it is, Eliot's own poetry is not free from this defect in that it is dominated by intellect to the almost total exclusion of emotion. His sensibility thus is as split or dissociated as that of the romantics whom he criticises.

Eliot makes an elaborate defence of his obscurity: "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate, if necessary, language into his meaning." This explanation is hard to swallow, though it has been accepted by many people without raised eyebrows. Complexity of modern civilization is no new phenomenon. Pages of history groan with this complaint; yet no poet has ever tortured language to such an extent or advanced such an argument in support of unintelligibility. The truth, often missed in the noises of criticism, is that the greatest poets, like the greatest men of all ages, are the simplest.

The clue to Eliot's vision as a poet is indicated in the following two critical extracts.

"But the essential advantage for a poet is not to have a beautiful world with which to deal; it is to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory."

"The contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative aspect of the impulse toward the pursuit of beauty. But not all succeed as did Dante in expressing the complete scale from negative to positive. The negative is the more importunate." (*Sacred Wood*)

Simply stated, a poet's vision should range over ugliness as well as beauty, but the ugly should receive greater concentration. The reference to Dante is significant. The scale from negative to positive in Dante is represented by the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso* of the *Divine Comedy*. In Eliot, the scale moves from the earlier poems including the *Waste Land* (*Inferno*) through *Ash Wednesday* and *The Rock* (*Purgatorio*) to the *Four Quartets* (*Paradiso*). The negative or the uglier aspect of life is certainly the more insistent in Eliot.

Synopsis of the Poems

Eliot's poems defy analysis or summary. What follows is a bare gist indicating in a general way the theme of each of the more important poems.

Prufrock and Other Observations. This, the first volume of Eliot's, presents a picture of the sordid and bored life of London during the years of the first world war. It consists of the following poems: 'The Love-song of Mr. Alfred J. Prufrock', 'Portrait of a Lady' and 'Preludes' comprising 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', 'Morning at the Window', 'The Boston Evening Transcript', 'Aunt Helen', 'Cousin Nancy', 'Mr. Apollonax', 'Hysteria', 'Conversation Galante', 'La Figlia Che Plange'.

'The Love-song of Prufrock' is a dramatic monologue in which Mr. Prufrock unloads his mind to his own suppressed self—the 'You' of the poem. A lady makes advances to Mr. Prufrock, but though amorous and passionate, he shies away. His passion has been conquered by timidity, but he gives other reasons than the real one to his suppressed self. Mr. Prufrock is the type of the modern intellectual with a dual or split personality. He is torn by conflict between sexual longing and its frustration.

'The Portrait of a Lady' continues the theme. Prufrock visits the lady again, but runs away from the sex battle as he learns more and more of the lady's past life in Paris and elsewhere. The conflict within him is now complicated by moral considerations.

This theme of sex attraction and repulsion is further developed in 'Hysteria', 'Conversation Galante' and 'La Figlia Che Plange'.

In 'The Boston Evening Transcript' (newspaper) 'Aunt Helen' and 'Cousin Nancy', Eliot satirises New England's puritanism and philistinism.

In the *Prufrock* volume Eliot appears as a writer of society verse.

Poems, 1920. These may be roughly divided into two groups: religious and secular. The religious group comprises 'Gerontion', 'Hippopotamus', 'Whispers of Immortality' and 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday morning Service'; the secular group consists of 'Burbank with a Baedeker', 'Bleistein with a Cigar', 'A Cooking Egg', 'Sweeny Erect', 'Sweeny among the Nightingales', and four French poems.

'Gerontion' (a little old man). The old man's senses are chilled with age, but his craving for sensuous enjoyment has not departed. This is the only sense one gathers, but what connection there is between the old man and the discussion of religion which seems to be the theme of the poem is beyond me. And yet this is one of the most talked - of poems of Eliot.

'Hippopotamus'. This is a satire on the Church. Hippopotamus, a gross, earthy creature is transported to heaven, but the Church which is spiritual is left behind.

'Whispers of Immortality'. The idea of the poem is too abstruse to be reduced to a clear or definite statement. The fever of the body cannot be quenched by gratification of the senses; it craves for something beyond the flesh—for immortality or life after death. Dominated by the flesh as we are, we are afraid of contact with the

flesh; so we cannot conceive of any embodied life after death. We, therefore, take refuge in abstractions like disembodied spirit, etc. This is puzzling. Did Eliot believe in embodied or fleshly immortality?

'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service'. This is another satire on the Church. The Church has become commercial. Mr. Sweeny, for instance, can be baptised at home in his bathroom without attending the Sunday morning service by just sending his pennies to the presbyters. Christ was the first mediator. Then came Origen (a second century Christian scholar) who weakened Christian doctrine by his unorthodox speculations. Finally, Christianity was debased by money-hungry priests. The presbyters are worldly and beget many children. The poem is full of erudite words like 'polyphilogenitive'.

Secular Group: 'Burbank with a Baedeker', 'Bleistein with a Cigar'. Baedeker is a popular guide-book for tourists. The epigraph of the poem is formidable, consisting, as it does, of half a dozen quotations—from Theophile Gautier, Mantegora (his motto on a candle: Nothing is permanent unless divine: the rest is smoke), Henry James's *Aspern Papers*, Shakespeare's *Othello* (IV, 2) and Browning, and Marston.

The poem gives impressions of Venice through the two tourists of the title. Burbank, the romantic, falls for Princess Volupine (a suggestive name)—the popular impression of Venice as a pleasure resort. The Princess later succumbs to Sir Alfred Klein. His surname may be unromantic, but he is rich and that is enough for the modern Cleopatra. Bleistein is coarse and commercial and sees 'Money in furs'. He looks at a picture by Canaletto, but he is not interested in art and his eye declines like his cigar—'the smoky candle end of time'. Burbank speculates on who sculptured the lions on St. Mark's Cathedral. The decline of Venice is indicated by its moral degradation. Money is her new God. The gondola man gets large tips and a princess sells herself to a moneybag. "Nothing is permanent unless divine." A St. Sebastian by Canaletto refers to a picture of St. Sebastian painted by Canaletto, an eighteenth century Venetian painter. St. Sebastian was martyred in 288 A.D.

'Cooking Egg'. A cooking egg need not be fresh; it is the kind used in cheap restaurants. The motto from Francois Villon's *Great Testament* is "In the 30th year of my age when I have drunk all my shame." It is quite possible that it has personal application to Eliot. The theme is disillusionment. Youthful dreams of honour (Sir Philip Sidney), of wealth (Sir Alfred Mond, a modern millionaire), of society (Lucretia Borgia for a bride), of celestial philosophy (Madam Blavatsky, Piccarda de Donati), remain unrealized. (Madam Blavatsky will be easily recognised as the great Russian theosophist. Donati is the heavenly guide in *Paradiso* III). In his 30th year the speaker is drinking the shame of frustrated hopes and aspirations. In contrast with the glorious prospect he had naively conjured up in his youth, he finds himself eating crumpets

(containing stale eggs) in company with plebeians in cheap restaurants. Instead of the beautiful and sophisticated Lucretia Borgia he would have to be content with the uninspiring and priggish Pipit for a mate. 'The red-eyed scavengers', if they have any symbolical meaning other than the working people (plebeians) it is known only to the author.

'Sweeny Erect'. This is supposed to be an ironical comment upon Emerson's definition of history as "the lengthened shadow of men." A woman epileptic (wife or mistress of Sweeny?) is writhing in bed, while Sweeny, unconcerned, is busy shaving. He calls the epileptic's condition 'female temperament', while other women think it is hysteria. Mrs. Turner, the land-lady, is concerned about the reputation of the house. Doris, a prostitute, steps forth from the bathroom with smelling salts and a glass of brandy for the patient. From all these details one is free to guess the cause of what has happened. As Sweeny in a later poem is called 'Apeneck' i.e. a monkey (who in this poem is 'erect'), a lecher, it may be supposed that the poem hints at something sordid. So history becomes the lengthened shadow of apeman (of man the lecher).

'Sweeny among the Nightingales'. The poem is supposed to suggest a sense of foreboding. "The wages of sin is death," and apeneck Sweeny is threatened with death or disaster. He is trapped by women in a Spanish cafe, senses danger, withdraws, but returns, being too fascinated by the game to escape the net. The host converses apart with an indistinct figure who must be taken as death or his agent. The symbolic imagery of the constellations, the Convent of the Sacred Heart, the bloody wood, the singing of the nightingales ('the liquid siftings') which stains Agamemnon's shroud, etc. is too complicated to explain. The motto in Greek is Agamemnon's cry when he is struck down by his son Orestes: "Ay me! I am smitten with a mortal blow."

The French Poems. Of the French poems 'Dans le Restaurant' anticipates the thought of the *Waste Land*. Because of its relevance to that more important poem the story is given under *Waste Land*.

The Waste Land. *The Waste Land* is the most famous poem of Eliot's as well as the obscurest in the English language. It is not only obscure but perverse in its obscurity. The style is cryptic, incredibly condensed, and chaotic. To help the reader out Eliot has added notes and recommended two anthropological works Jessie L. Weston's book on the Holy Grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance* and Frazer's *Golden Bough*. In the first place, few readers are willing to undertake such fasting and prayer; secondly those who have followed the injunction have not found the books very helpful. It would be a tedious and vain endeavour to thread one's way through the tangled forest of *The Waste Land*—its unfamiliar myths and symbols, its numerous quotations and allusions. The utmost a literary history can do is to indicate so far as possible what the poem is about.

The theme of the poem is lust and its deadly consequences. That the germ of this idea was present in Eliot's mind a few years earlier is proved by the fact that it is anticipated in the French poem 'Dans le Restaurant' (1918). The story of this earlier poem may, therefore, be given here.

A dirty old waiter relates his earliest sex experience to a diner. He was seven and the girl was still younger. Caught in a shower of rain they took shelter under a cluster of willows. He tickled the girl to make her laugh and the contact roused his passion. He was in the middle of the act when he was interrupted by the appearance of a dog. He was frightened and had to stop. The diner too had had similar experience. He gave the waiter ten sous to clean himself in the bathroom. The waiter is ultimately cleansed when he is drowned and thus purged of his lust and greed. This cleansing is shown in the drowning of Phlebas, the Phoenician sailor, which forms part IV of *The Waste Land*.

The starting point of *The Waste Land* is the seduction of a German girl Marie. The experience makes the seducer afraid and he consults a fortune-teller. By means of playing cards she warns him of death by water. The seducer is symbolically identified with the old waiter of 'Dans le Restaurant', and the prophecy is fulfilled in his drowning in the sea, shown in part IV (*Death by Water*). What follows the fortune telling in part I (*Burial of the Dead*)—the symbolism of the Hanged God (corpse in the garden) etc. is not easy to follow.

The seduction theme is universalised and becomes relevant to the whole of England. It is developed in parts II and III entitled respectively *Game of Chess* and *The Fire Sermon*. They depict scenes of lust at various levels of society. The game of chess is a device to cover up 'affairs' between ladies and gents in the most luxurious surroundings reminiscent of Cleopatra and Dido. People at a lower level also have their 'good time'. A woman of thirty one with five children is advised by a friend to fit herself with a new set of teeth and generally to deck herself out in order to give her soldier husband (now demobbed and coming home) a good time. The scene between a typist and her lover, a house agent's clerk, is almost pornographic in its details.

Besides these there are other scenes of seduction and rape provided by the recitals of the Rhine-daughters and Thames-daughters. The mention of the waters of Lake Lemman (Lemman means lover) and of the Rhine-daughters brings Europe into the orbit of the poem. That lust is universal is indicated by the "falling towers" of "Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London" (Punctuation marks mine). The most significant aspect of modern love-making is that it is mechanical. There is no emotion, no thrill or ecstasy which is associated with love in the real sense. It is just a relaxation from boredom. This is shown in the typist's reaction. She is apathetic, indifferent, and feels relieved after the assault is over. After the lover's departure she looks in the mirror, smooths her hair and

with 'automatic' hand puts a record on the gramophone. All this is a parody of Goldsmith's song—

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
The only art her guilt to cover
.....is—to die.

From this point of view Eliot's poem is a reversal of Miss Weston's book. It may be called *From Romance to Ritual*. Lust is nothing but a mechanical, soul-less ritual.

The poem purports to portray the dead or dying civilization of England and the West generally after the first World War. The people were weary, disillusioned, and despairing. They felt their civilization had betrayed them. Their elders had glibly talked of science and democracy, peace and progress. Science, they discovered, meant only improved weapons of destruction. The war, they had been told, was fought to end all wars, to make the world safe for democracy. They had won the war but lost the peace. The peace-makers at Versailles had sown the seeds of another war. The people were bewildered. They wanted to forget the past which had cheated them and had nothing to look forward to in the future. They had no faith, nothing to believe in. In this predicament all they could do was to make the most of the fleeting present, to have a good time, to give themselves up to sensual pleasure.

The poem begins by depicting England as an arid desert where people are dying for want of water. This state of the land has been brought about by lust and greed which lead to death. Water is both preserver and destroyer of life. It allays thirst, but it also drowns. The Thames is a burning river of lust, of death. The whole of London, the 'unreal city', is infected. The speaker in the poem starts on a quest for the river of life. After long and tortuous travail he comes upon the water of life in the Ganga, which had nourished the spiritual culture of an ancient land. This culture is voiced by Thunder in Part V (*What the Thunder said*). It consists of three commandments obedience to which will regenerate mankind. They are three words from the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*: Datta, Dayadhwam, Damyata—Sanskrit words respectively meaning दान or giving, दया or mercy, दम or self-control. That which is most relevant to the poem is the third—self-control. Sex has two aspects. In its positive aspect, it is the originating cause of man; in its negative aspect, it is the cause of his destruction. Unless he exercises self-control he is doomed.

Though the solution to the problem is given at the end, its seriousness is disguised in a mask of mockery. The commandments are made to appear as the utterance of the mad Hieronymo of *The Spanish Tragedy*. This is done obviously to preserve the unity of impression—the impression of gloom and despair that marks the poem throughout. *The Waste Land* is Eliot's *Inferno*.

I have tried to make the above account of *The Waste Land* as

coherent as possible. Eliot confessedly based his poem on Miss Weston's book whose main thesis is that religious feeling originated in vegetation or fertility rites, i.e. in sex. These rites and the many myths and legends of Miss Weston's book belong to anthropology, and though they form the framework in which *The Waste Land* is set, they are not essential to the understanding of its theme. In fact, they serve no purpose except that of complicating it. I have accordingly cut them all out. A greater obstacle is the confusion of speakers in the poem. They so merge into one another that it is difficult to identify them. The only definitely identifiable character is Tiresias, the blind Theban prophet of Greek mythology, whom Eliot has given qualities of both the sexes, so that he can speak for all the characters.

Hollow Men (1925). The reader should refresh his memory about the Gunpowder Plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament in the reign of James I. (5 November 1605). Guy Fawkes being the leader in the plot, children in England commemorate the plot by burning the effigy of the chief conspirator on Guy Fawkes's Day. They go about begging pennies for fireworks very much like Hindu children begging subscriptions for firewood for Holi. The general sense of the poem is that just as children play a game of make-believe with Guy Fawkes's effigy, so we play a game of make-believe with religion. We are hollow men: our religion is a sham, shadow without substance.

Ash Wednesday (1930). Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent which lasts 40 days ending with Easter. The period is spent by devout Christians in fasting and penitence in commemoration of Christ's 40 days in the wilderness. Ash Wednesday is so called because of the ashes sprinkled by the priest on the penitent's head as a symbol of humility. The priest then says: 'Dust thou art, to dust returnest', thus reminding man of the transience of the world and of his need to turn to God, the only Reality.

In its simplest terms the argument of the poem is this:

Man wants to turn to God but he lacks the necessary strength of will. Frustrations of life fill him with despair and he wants to die. He discovers the cause of this; it is self-absorption. It is his ego, his little self with its egocentric desires, that is the source of all his miseries. Being thus illumined he frees himself from his ego. The ego conquered, he is released from all frustrations and acquires the necessary strength of will to turn to God as well as to the world. He finds his peace in His will.

This capacity for total surrender to God comes to man only after the destruction or death of his self. The death of the self means the end of narrow egocentric desires and thus of all sorrows. It is only after this purgation that man is reborn, as it were, on the higher plane of his real self, his divine nature. *Ash Wednesday* is inspired by the closing cantos of Dante's *Purgatorio* and is Eliot's counterpart to it.

Choruses from The Rock (1934). The choruses are taken out from *The Rock*, a pageant-play produced at Saddler's Well Theatre in aid of a church building fund. The chorus made up of seven men and ten women speaks as the voice of St. Peter, who is the Rock on which the church is founded. In St. Matthew (16, 18) Christ says: "And I say also unto thee, That art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." The Rock or St. Peter is himself a character in the play. It is nevertheless the poet who is 'haranguing' the audience. The piece is in ten parts. The first corresponds to the prologue of a play and expounds the theme, which is elaborated, not very coherently, through the succeeding parts. Unlike Eliot's other poems, the choruses are simple and direct, but like them they are repetitive and ill-organised.

The theme is the same as that of *Ash Wednesday*. Only here it is set in a frame-work that is concrete rather than symbolic or abstract. The Prologue sets forth the problem—the British denial of God and the contradictions and paradoxes into which it has landed them. The Rock comes and begins with the exhortation: "Make perfect your will" (the will to believe) and do not desire reward of your action (Krishna's philosophy of action without attachment).

What are the contradictions of British life? Here are some of them: They have amassed a lot of knowledge, but no wisdom; they have a plethora of books, of words, but not the Word; their science has given them knowledge of motion, but not of 'stillness' (peace); there is so much to do—to build, restore, reconstruct—and yet there is widespread unemployment and poverty. In short, they are so busy living that they have lost the meaning of life.

The Rock tells them that all their great achievements owe their significance to their faith and that they will not survive that faith. The British have lost their faith in God and transferred it to money. 'The Stranger' warns them that if they do not wake up, their gross materialism—lust, greed, usury—will lead to their ruination. All is not lost, however, for whatever their faults, however weak or vacillating their faith, they are still Christians. Nothing is impossible. The situation can be retrieved. "Only make perfect your will." He does not preach asceticism. "We are body and spirit; therefore let us not deny the body." The poem concludes with a hymn of thanks-giving to the "Light Invisible".

Though Eliot is a humourless writer, *The Rock* has a few touches of wit and humour which relieve its seriousness. Criticising the separatist and disrupted life in British homes he instances the son who rushes about on a motor cycle and the daughter who rides on a pillion behind any chance friend or acquaintance (Part II). Why do the English people live so close and huddled together? Their answer: "We all dwell together to make money from each other." People do not want to listen to the church because it speaks of Good and Evil, Life and Death, Sin, etc. "They would rather forget these things and devise a system so perfect that nobody need be good."

Incidentally the disjointed character of the poem has resulted in a

contradiction. In Part II, the people are criticised for living "dispersed on ribbon roads," etc; in Part III, they are criticised for living close together in order "to make money from each other."

Four Quartets. In *Four Quartets* the theme of *Ash Wednesday* is repeated, continued, and expanded. Man comes to lean on God after he has completely subjugated his individual self. As God is love, man comes to feel his oneness with the whole universe and opens his bosom to embrace all created beings. He comes to realize that the world is transient, impermanent, unreal, and that God or Love is the only Reality.

The meaning of the poem is comprehended in the motto taken from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who wrote about 500 years before Christ. The motto means that the external world is a continuous series of change, but through all this flux runs a principle of Unity, or order and harmony. This principle is the Logos or Reason of the universe. The apparent oppositions and contradictions of the *many* are resolved in the *One*, the Logos, which never changes. *Many* is appearance and *One* Reality. Virtue, accordingly, consists in the subordination of individual self-interest to the general or universal interest—to the law of unity and harmony or Logos.

The Heraclitan view that the external world is a passing show and has no permanence is unintelligible to the western mind, and has led to Heraclitus being called 'the weeping philosopher'. His doctrine, however, is identical with that of the *Geeta* or Vedantic philosophy where the illusory world is called *Maya*. As Krishna is brought into the poem and a couple of quotations from the *Geeta* figure in the text (*Dry Salvages*), it may be presumed that the Vedantic conception of the universe, which is the same as that of Heraclitus, formed an integral part of Eliot's philosophy of life. The one and only reality is called Logos in Heraclitus, Supreme Self or Brahma (ब्रह्म) in Vedanta and Love in Eliot. It is super consciousness, the great Perceptive Power or Wisdom which sustains the universe.

Much of the poem is mere repetition of *Ash Wednesday*. In that poem Love was shown as the resolver of all puzzles and paradoxes. In the present poem Eliot takes a closer look at life to discover its real meaning. He begins by probing the meaning of time. Time is both temporary and eternal. Ordinary secular life belongs to time in its temporary or temporal aspect. A great spiritual life like Christ's belongs to time in its eternal aspect. The past is not dead but continues into the present, and it is the awareness of this which constitutes the historical sense. Time acquires meaning only by significant events that happen in it. The birth of Christ at a pre-destined moment of time was a landmark of history. It gave meaning to time by making a notch in it, by intersecting it, and became timeless, something that will live for ever.

Another instance of significant event, and thus of timeless moment, is the sacrifice of Little Gidding. Here the little anglican community became martyrs to their faith.

History is a pattern of such timeless moments. Christ and the martyrs of Little Gidding are timeless, immortal. And they are immortal precisely because they sacrificed themselves for something higher than themselves. In Eliot's words—

As West and East
In all flat maps (and I am one) are one
So death doth touch Resurrection.

The bodily death of Christ meant his rebirth to Eternal Life. The meaning of Time is also the meaning of Life. We are alive only when we sacrifice ourselves for the good of the whole. In the words of Krishna, when our life is one continuous *yagna* or sacrifice. Love it will be seen, is thus that which gives meaning to life. Life is Love. Love is the ultimate Reality variously called God, Supreme Self, Oversoul, Brahma. Apprehension of this Reality is Self-realization, Self-fulfilment. This is the 'still centre', the calm and restful sanctuary of the soul into which man enters when he has escaped from Becoming into Being, from desire which is movement and agitation, into desirelessness. It is a state of Peace that passeth understanding. It is Eliot's Heaven and *Four Quartets* his *Paradiso*.

A brief explanation of the titles may be of some help in giving the reader the biographical background of the poet. The *Four Quartets* have been described as "the record of four pilgrimages whose purpose is the re-discovery of and reconciliation with the past." The titles are place names associated with Eliot and his family. Burnt Norton is a deserted manor in Gloucestershire; East Coker is a village in Somerset the original home of the Eliots; Dry Salvages is a cape on the coast of New England (The Eliot family had migrated to Boston in the 17th century), and Little Gidding is a village in Hunting-donshire where a small Anglican community founded by Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637), a Cambridge scholar, lived a pious life of meditation and prayer. The community was ransacked by Parliamentary troops in 1646.

In their physical aspect the four places complete the cycle of Eliot's life. Since this personal history is woven into the larger framework of universal history, it is not fanciful to suppose that it symbolises the cycle of Becoming and Being. All Becoming, all change, proceeds from Being and after travelling its course ends in Being—"Our beginning is our end, and our end our beginning."

There is no order or necessary sequence between the four parts of the poem. The main theme is developed in "Burnt Norton" and "Little Gidding". "East Coker" develops the Greek idea that the movement of time is circular. It is illustrated by the cycle of Eliot's life. His family had left East Coker and migrated to America, and the son of the family ends up at the very place whence he had started: "Our beginning is our end, and our end our beginning." Incidentally this was a prophetic statement, for Eliot lies buried in East Coker. "Dry Salvages" is the least intelligible of the four parts.

The sources of Eliot's unintelligibility have been already glanced at. What makes matters worse in "Dry Salvages" is the blundering interpretation of one of the quotations from the *Geeta*. The verse in the *Geeta* is—

यं यं वापि स्मर-भावं त्यजत्यन्ते कलेवरम् ।
तं तमेवैति कौन्तेय सदा तद्भावभावितः ॥ (VIII, 6)

Literally translated the verse means: O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), on whatever object a man's mind is intent at the time of death, that and that alone he attains (in the next birth), because of his constant thinking of that object in his life. The translation or interpretation in Eliot is: "On whatever sphere of being the mind of man may be bent at the time of death—That is the one action (And the time of death is every moment) which shall fructify in the lives of others." The concluding phrase "in the lives of others" makes utter nonsense of the original.

Ariel Poems (1927-30). These are *Journey of the Magi*, *A Song for Simeon*, *Animula*, *The Cultivation of Christmas Trees* and *Marina*. All these except *Marina* were written before *Ash Wednesday* which they anticipate.

The Journey of the Magi. The Magi (pron. Maji) were the three wise men from the East who brought gifts for the infant Christ. One of the Magi describes the hardships of their journey to the place of Christ's birth. The birth of Christ was the death of the Magi. Birth and death are the same, for Christ's birth meant transformation of the lives of the witnesses. They were dead to their former selves; their worldly delusions had ended. When they returned to their former kingdoms, they found themselves among alien people clutching their gods. The speaker would be glad of another such death.

A Song for Simeon (St. Luke 2, 25-30). Simeon, a pious old man of Jerusalem, foresees the death of Christ and the horrors and desolation that would follow that event. The old man is dying but he has seen the infant Christ and petitions Him to grant him 'Israel's consolation'. There will be saints and martyrs, but he will not be one of them. He nevertheless experiences the lives and deaths of all of them. He is content in that he has seen salvation (Christ) and asks leave to depart.

Animula. The poem, inspired by a passage in Dante points out the contrast between the innocence of childhood and the distortion of manhood. The first part of the poem describes 'the simple soul' as it "issues from the hand of God", the second part beginning at line 24 describes the same soul as it "issues from the hand of time". The child confounds the actual and the fanciful. Perplexed by the authoritative commands what to do and what to avoid, he takes refuge from the unpleasant reality in "the drug of dreams" and pours

over *Encyclopedia Britannica*. After the impact of time and experience, the same soul, now man, is irresolute, selfish, and insensitive to spiritual influences. He is a deadened soul who will live only in the silence of the tomb. Pray for such souls.

The Cultivation of Christmas Trees. The idea is that we should cherish our childhood memories of the Christmas tree. To a child the candles and angels with which the tree is decked out are not mere decorations. To him the candle is a star and the angel a real angel. The child's thrill is compounded of wonder, reverence, awe and joy. Accumulated memories of that emotion can be a beneficent influence in our last moments.

Marina. In this poem Eliot gives a new orientation to the recovery of Marina in Shakespeare's *Pericles*. The motto is from Seneca's tragedy *Hercules Furens*. Hercules in a fit of madness brought on by his inveterate enemy Juno, kills his wife and children, and falls into deep slumber. Awaking bewildered he wonders where he is and asks: "What place is this? what region, what quarter of the world?" Gradually he recovers, realizes the horror of what he has done, and is filled with despair. In Eliot's treatment of the recovery theme, Pericles forgets all the horrors of the story at the sight of Marina. The horrors are "by this grace dissolved in place". She becomes a symbol of divine grace which confers new life on Pericles.

To sum up: 'Pedantry run mad' would not be an inappropriate summing up of Eliot's poetry. Almost all his poems are derivative, and considering the preponderance in them of borrowings and quotations, they may well be said to be commentaries on other writers. He is the most bookish of authors in the English language. He has no originality, only ingenuity. In developing tradition, he has added little that is new except the newness of manner. The English poet he recalls most is Pope. The comparison, however, is not to Eliot's advantage. For, though like Pope, he is a brilliant craftsman in words, his dressing up of other people's thoughts is not as pleasing as Pope's. Pope has given us a large number of pithy maxims which have become current coin of English speech and writing; Eliot has only one slogan to his credit "This is the way the world ends not with a bang but a whimper." Pope's couplets have a music of their own; Eliot has no music to offer other than the 'music of ideas' which only the elite can appreciate. From a classicist, as he claims to be, we expect clarity, order, precision, but he is the very antithesis of these qualities. Artistic economy is no doubt a virtue, but it ceases to be a virtue when it is achieved at the cost of clarity. His poetic production is scanty and his range narrow, and even within these limits he repeats himself.

Whether one likes Eliot or not, however, he cannot be dismissed cavalierly. He was the leading figure in English poetry in the 20s and 30s and exercised considerable influence on the younger generation in the inter-war years. Eliot is a religious poet. No serious reader of poetry can fail to notice the religious and moral beauty of his mature poems. When *The Waste Land* appeared in 1922, his perfer-

vid admirers hailed it as the greatest poem in the English language and adopted it almost as their scripture. Its theme was topical and its style revolutionary. They saw in it only gloom and despair which answered to the pessimistic and disillusioned mood of the times; but they failed to see the silver lining in the three commandments of thunder which conclude the poem. They were dismayed when a real scripture appeared in *Ash Wednesday* (1930). They thought the poet was lost, when in fact he had found himself. After the publication of *Four Quartets* (1935-42) their disappointment with the poet must have been complete. We can see Eliot's progression, from the agony of *The Waste Land* through the humility and faith of *Ash Wednesday* to the redemption of the *Four Quartets*. Eliot had achieved his self integration.

It is a pity that these poems which should have been a refreshment and renewal to the spirit are only a headache. They evoke no religious or other normal human emotion. Abstruse ideas made more abstruse by unfamiliar myth and symbol, by ambiguity and paradox, fill the poems. The reader is lost in the maze of the poet's ingenuities until weary of the search for meaning he shuts the book.

The historical importance of Eliot as leader of the 'modernist' school of poetry is undeniable, but the intrinsic worth of his poetic achievement is not very high. Even the cleverness of a Pope is not his. He has still a prestige value deriving from his modernity. Modernity, however, is not a poetic quality and no poet can thrive on it for long.

Postscript. Since the above was written Mrs. Eliot has published the early drafts of *The Waste Land* (1971), which tend to show that the poem in its original, unamended form was more personal than the later. Mrs. Eliot is emphatic in repeating Eliot's assertion that the poem was not about a decaying civilization, that it expressed his own personal anguish. The comment on this edition of *The Waste Land* by Valerie Pitt (*The London Times*, 8 April 1972) is a longish argument intended to show that what is true of *The Waste Land* is equally true of Eliot's Christian poems, that they express his faith in Christianity, however embryonic, long before he adopted anglo-catholicism in 1927 when he was nearly 40.

This revelation does not materially alter the view expressed in the above article viz. that the so-called impersonal poetry of Eliot was merely his personal experience incorporated in, or identified with, the general or universal experience.

The Sitwells. Edith Sitwell (1887-1964), and her brothers Osbert (1892-) and Sacheverell (1897-). These three belong rather to the history of prose than that of poetry. They gained notoriety because they figured prominently in public discussions of the new poetry. As a counterblast to the volumes of *Georgian Poetry* (1912-22) published by Sir Lewis Marsh, an aristocratic amateur of letters, the Sitwells started *Wheels* (1916-21) whose annual numbers (cycles) contained their ultra-modern poems designed to proclaim their

extreme anti-traditionalism. Edith Sitwell's excursions into poetry are represented by such volumes as *Clown's Houses* (1918), *Bucolic Comedies* (1923), *Troy Park* (1925), *Facade* (1926), *Gold Coast Customs*, *A Song of the Cold* (1945). A collected edition of her poems appeared in 1930.

The general theme of Miss Sitwell's poems is her sense of loss of a vanished ideal world—primitive, healthy, innocent—which is contrasted with the hell of a sick civilisation. In the earlier poems the ideal world she pictures is that of her aristocratic childhood; in the later she suggests the contrast by ironic or parodic references to the idealism of the Elizabethan age. Sample such witticisms as "Then die with me and be my love"; "But steel wings fan thee to thy rest."

Miss Sitwell is superficially brilliant and profoundly obscure. In her sensational diction and supersubtle verse technique she out-Eliots Eliot. In criticism she has played a notable part in the revival of Pope, but here too her book *Alexander Pope* (1930) suffers from excess. The brothers need no further notice.

W.H. Auden (1907-73). Noisy and aggressive, Auden was the least poetical of the group he led. Marxism, psycho-analysis, a flair for satirical abuse, clowning a little lyricism—these qualities sum up the one-time popular poet of the 30s. A collected edition of his shorter poems appeared in 1950. He was also the anthologist of *The Oxford Book of Light Verse* (1938), *Tennyson* (1946) and the *Faber Book of Modern American Verse* (1955). His major critical work is *The Enchanted Wood* (1950). His dramatic work in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood is considered in a later chapter. That Auden had turned a new leaf is quite clear from his prose *Enchafed Flood* (1950).

Christopher Isherwood is better known in India by his translation in collaboration with Swami Prabhavananda of the *Bhagwadgita* (1945). He has written a series of novels of which the best are *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Prater Violet* (1945). These and others show his interest in abnormal psychology.

In spite of their common ideology the other members of the group are truer poets than Auden. In their work we have glimpses of a hidden or suppressed romantic spirit. This becomes clearer in their more recent poems, from which one may infer that they have outgrown the revolutionary enthusiasms of their under-graduate days.

Cecil Day Lewis (1904-) was Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1951-56) and is at present Professor of Poetry at the university of Hull. He succeeded Masfield as poet laureate in 1967. His published work includes *Transitional Poems* (1929), *A Time to Dance* (1935), *Overtures to Death* (1938), *Word over All* (1943).

Stephen Spender (1909-), German on his mother's side, describes his association with Auden and Christopher Isherwood in his autobiography *World within World* (1951). He has served on the editorial staff of *Horizon* and *Encounter*. Because of his liberal ideals and deep

human sympathies he has been called sentimental by his critics. He is more extravagant and obscure in expression than the others of the group. His verse publications include *Poems* (1933), *Trial of a Judge* (1938), *The Still Centre* (1939), *Ruins and Visions* (1941).

Louis Macneice (1907-), son of an Irish Bishop (Ulster), is the most individual of the group. A classical scholar, saner in outlook and more romantic than the others, he is also more traditional in technique. His expression is simple, direct, and elegant, in refreshing contrast to the exhibitionist crudities of his friends. Macneice has been writer and producer of radio plays for BBC for over two decades. His major publications are *The Earth Compels* (1938), *Autumn Journal* (1939), *Plant and Phantom* (1941), *Springboard* (1944), *The Dark Tower* (1946).

The number of poets writing at the present time is very large, and any selection from amongst them as representative of contemporary poetry cannot please every body. Nevertheless, we would suggest the following names as our personal choice. Those who wish to sample their poetry are referred to such anthologies as *The Faber Book of Modern Verse* or *Anthology of Modern Poetry* by John Wain. Some of the important poets are: Edwin Muir (1887-1958); Robert Graves (1895-) author of two well-known prose books: *Goodbye to All That* and *I, Claudius*; William Empson (1906-) famous for his critical work, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*; Norman McCraig (1910-); Terence Tiller (1915-); Philip Larkin (1922-); Elizabeth Jennings (1926-); Thomas Gunn (1929-); Ted Hughes (1930-); Sylvia Plath (1932-63, American, was married to Ted Hughes).

Of modern American poets the two most important names are: Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) and William Carlos Williams (1883-).

CHAPTER 47

THE DRAMA: REVIVAL AND AFTER

19th Century. Decline of drama in 19th century—Reasons: large theatres, inappreciative audiences, middle class puritanic prejudice, rise of novel above all—Dramatists: Robertson: the Scottish pioneer; Gilbert and Sullivan: their operas; Oscar Wilde: his sparkling comedies.

20th Century. Revival of drama in the 90s under the influence of Ibsen—Chief agents in this revival: Edmund Gosse, William Archer, Shaw—Opening of smaller theatres to promote the new drama of ideas—Dramatists of the 90s: Pinero and Jones—Great dramatists of early 20th century: Shaw, Barker, Galsworthy and Barrie—Others: Massingford and 'repertory' dramatists—Irish dramatists: Yeats, Synge, O'Casey—major dramatists after the first world war: Maugham and Coward—Their plays realistic, theatrically brilliant but not literary—This divorce between drama and literature more marked in their followers of the 40s—Revival in the 40s of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists by Gielgud and Olivier—Contemporary drama: neo-Realistic drama of the 50s highlighted by Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956)—'epic' theatre of Brecht—"absurd theatre" of Ionesco represented by Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1955)—Artaud's "theatre of cruelty"—Topical or documentary drama of the 60s.

Nineteenth Century Drama

It is a commonplace of literary history that the 19th century England had little or no drama to speak of. For nearly a hundred years after Goldsmith and Sheridan, the drama in England suffered a serious decline. The blight that had settled upon English drama in the 18th century continued in the 19th century until quite the end when fresh life was injected into it by Shaw and others under the influence of the Norwegian dramatist Ibsen. Many reasons have been suggested for this eclipse: large theatres, inappreciative audiences, puritanical middle class prejudice and the growing importance of the Novel. Of these the last seems the soundest. Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, George Eliot and the Brontës—to name the greatest—belong to this period. The financial rewards of the novel were far greater than those of the drama. The great poets of the period—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne—all attempted plays which failed through sheer unactability. Drama is art as well as craft. The poets lacking the necessary technical skill pro-

duced closet dramas, good as literature but bad as plays.

Men of talent thus drawn to prose fiction or poetry, playwriting was left to mediocrities. They supplied the stage with farces and melodramas generally adapted from French sources. This suited the actor—managers, who catered to audiences composed mainly of rakish aristocrats and riff-raff of the town. Such audiences did not care for literary excellence—good dialogue, fine character-drawing etc. They demanded plays that lent themselves to lavish spectacle, ranting declamation, theatricality and music. The farces and melodramas which provided all this were just the thing for them. The actors too were happy in that they had an opportunity to rant and roar to their heart's content. Such plays had no relation to actual life. The stage was divorced not only from literature but also from the current of contemporary life. It had ceased to reflect reality which is the life—breath of drama.

How English drama was rescued from this artificiality under the impact of Ibsen is a story which will shortly follow. But a beginning in the direction of realism was made in the 60s by a man of humble origin who had never heard of Ibsen. This was T.W. Robertson (1829-71) whose pioneering work in the revival of English drama has not received the notice it deserves. He belonged to a Scottish family of actors and his earlier plays were the usual adaptations of French comedies. On a sudden inspiration, however, he decided to write of real life and real people and produced among others two plays, *Society* (1865) and *Caste* (1867), which according to the standards of those days must be accounted revolutionary in theme as well as in treatment. Their success was immediate, *Caste* having a run of one hundred and fifty nights in London. As might be guessed from the title the theme of *Caste* is the sharp division between the upper and lower classes. George D'Alroy, son of a marquise, falls violently in love with a chorus girl of working class origin. The complications of such an affair can be imagined, but the match does take place, and George gets embarrassing in-laws. Eccles, the father-in-law, is a drunken loafer who cadges from George a half-sovereign for his drink, Sam the brother-in-law is a gasfitter, and Polly the sister-in-law is a common and undistinguished girl. Sam's reflections on the union sum up the author's own attitude to matters of this kind: "People should stick to their own class. Life's a railway journey, and Mankind's a passenger—first class, second class, third class. Any person found travelling in a superior class will be removed according to the by-laws of the company."

Robertson was a pioneer not only in introducing realistic themes but also in imitating realistic acting and stage production.

Robertson died at forty-two in 1871 and for the next twenty years there was no one to continue the movement he had begun. When the dramatic revival began in the 90s, Shaw, Pinero, Jones and others sang the praises of Ibsen, and the Scottish pioneer was forgotten.

Two other writers who belong to the history of 19th century

English drama remain to be noticed. They are W.S. Gilbert (1835-1911) and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Both of them have already come in for mention as verse-writers. Gilbert was a master of burlesque and his *Bab Ballads* are not likely to be forgotten. He also wrote successful plays, both serious and comic, but these are all but forgotten, being overshadowed by his famous comic operas. Known as Gilbert and Sullivan operas because they were produced in collaboration with Sir Arthur Sullivan (who provided the music), they appeared in the 70s and 80s. The most famous of these are *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *Mikado*, *Patience* and *Princess Ida*. The story in the operas is of secondary importance, their chief interest lying in epigrammatic wit and comic absurdities. Their inimitable humour can only be described as Gilbertian. They include some topical and social satire; are often revived, and will never date.

Oscar Wilde's plays were produced in the early 90s. The best known are his sparkling comedies: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. His play *Salome* (1893) originally in French and later translated into English was banned in England. It was produced in Paris in 1896, and after the removal of the English ban, in England in 1931.

Wilde, the aesthete, was a brilliant conversationalist, and the chief recommendation of his comedies is their brilliant dialogue. His plays are reminiscent of Sheridan, with this important difference that Sheridan never carried his wit to the cloying excess of Wilde. His best play is undoubtedly *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Its plot is summarised below.

The Importance of Being Earnest. Algernon Moncrieff and Jack Worthing are friends. The entire plot turns upon the fact that the latter has two names: Earnest in town and Jack in the country. He is the guardian to the eighteen year old Cecily who is being educated at his manor house. To account to her for his frequent pleasure trips to London he has invented a scapegrace younger brother of the name of Earnest. Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell's daughter and Algernon's cousin, accepts Jack's proposal of marriage principally because she is in love with his name Earnest. Lady Bracknell however, refuses her consent on the ground that Jack's origin is obscure. Coming to know of Cecily's growing interest in Earnest, Algernon visits the manor house in the character of the wicked Earnest, while Jack is away in London. Their romance is, however, interrupted by the arrival of Jack, Lady B. and Gwendolen. The complications are resolved by the discovery that Jack is Algy's elder brother and that his name is really Earnest. The play ends with the union of the two couples.

Here are a few specimens of Wilde's wit from the play summarised above.

Cecily to Algy—Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life. . . .

Lady Bracknell to Jack—He (Algy) has nothing but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

Lady Bracknell to Cecily—You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating.

Jack—Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

The list could be multiplied indefinitely from other plays. The point to note is that when all characters speak cleverly, it is hard to remember which is which.

An artist to his finger-tips, Wilde hated reality and stood aloof from the movement which demanded serious, realistic drama. According to him all art is decoration and therefore artificial. His view is well summed up in the following quotation from his essay *The Soul of Man under Socialism*: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing."

This statement is well worth pondering over; for, as later developments have shown, the fanatical pursuit of reality under the names of realism and naturalism has made a good deal of modern literature intolerably dull.

Twentieth Century Drama

Modern English drama began in the 90s of the last century under the impact of the Norwegian dramatist Ibsen. Sir Edmund Gosse, William Archer, and Bernard Shaw were the men who brought Ibsen to the notice of Englishmen. Gosse wrote his biography, Archer translated him and Shaw wrote *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, but it was not until a Dutchman J.T. Grein opened his Independent theatre in 1891 that the full significance of Ibsenism was revealed in England.

In order to follow later developments it is necessary to remember a few facts about the British theatre at the end of the 19th century. Upto the middle of the century only two theatres, the Covent Garden and Drury Lane were licensed to give public performances. These vast theatres did not permit of good dialogue being heard, much less appreciated by serious-minded spectators. The rowdy audiences cared only for spectacular, sensational and musical effects and had all but banished literature from the theatre. By the Act of 1843 the monopoly of Covent Garden and Drury Lane was broken and other and smaller theatres came into existence. With the establishment of smaller theatres for the middle classes, talented playwrights began to write for the stage. This was a notable improvement, but the tyranny of the actor-manager still remained. The star actor would accept only those plays which suited his particular histrionic abilities and mannerisms and turned down others. Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* remained unstaged for ten years until the establishment of Grein's

Independent theatre in 1891.

In 1890s in reaction against this tyranny there arose all over Europe a welcome crop of small independent theatres interested in experimental drama. Antoine's *Theatre Libre* in Paris was founded in 1887 and Otto Brahm's *Freie Buhne* in Berlin in 1889. In England, Grein's first Independent theatre was succeeded by the Stage Society, the Court Theatre, made famous by Vedrenne-Barker season (1904-7), the Froham Repertory at the Duke of York's, the Kingsway theatre, the Abbey Theatre Dublin (1904) and the repertory theatres of Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham and other centres. These small independent theatres were the nursery of the new experimental drama whose victory they consolidated in the early years of the twentieth century.

The small independent theatre is uncommercial, and must be distinguished from the commercial West End theatre whose main interest was and is box office income. The commercial theatre is unwilling to take risks with new or experimental plays; it accepts them only when they have succeeded elsewhere. The intelligent playgoers are always a minority and belonging as they do mostly to the middle classes, they cannot afford the West End prices. It is these who are the real patrons of the independent, uncommercial theatre. The movement for a National Theatre carried on for years by drama lovers seems at long last to have achieved its objective. The National Theatre Company is expected to move into its own building on the South Bank (of the Thames).

The establishment of small independent theatres opened a new chapter of significant possibilities and responsibilities in the history of modern drama. Though the fight was long and arduous, the new dramatists, presently to be named, killed the so-called actor's theatre and effectively neutralised the dominance of the actor-manager. A tentative beginning in the direction of the realistic play, we have seen, had already been made in the 1860s by Robertson. In the 90s, Pinero and Jones strengthened the realistic trends. For their time they were bold enough, but they went only so far and no further. In their midst burst Ibsen, and English drama took a long leap forward. His boldness in presenting domestic and social problems of ordinary men and women in finely constructed plays like *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and others in naturalistic prose set a high standard of literary excellence for serious realistic drama. Capable writers like Shaw, Barker and Galsworthy, followed his example and established a similar type of realistic drama in England, concerned especially with middle class life. Shaw, of course, was unique and outshone all the others in his combination of wit and brilliance, and delightful shocks and surprises. Barrie was another great playwright of this early boom period, but he was outside the realistic movement, his speciality being the play of humour and fantasy.

These four were the greatest playwrights of the pre-war period, but there were others who though less important achieved a high degree of excellence. Masefield, the poet laureate, wrote a number

of verse-plays, his most notable realistic play being the tragedy of *Nan*. The repertory theatres of the North produced such playwrights as Stanley Houghton, Alan Monkhouse, Harold Brighouse (all associated with Manchester), and Sir Barry Jackson and John Drinkwater, both products of Birmingham. Even more important in some ways were the Irish dramatists Yeats, Synge and O'Casey whose names are indissolubly linked with the Abbey theatre of Dublin which they had helped to create.

The playwrights we have named above belonged to the great period of English drama which lasted for about a quarter of century, from 1890 to 1915. There was some deterioration in the theatre during the war and in the years immediately following it. This was due to the exhaustion of the war and the disillusionment that came in its wake. The setback was temporary and in the postwar period the inexhaustible energy of Shaw continued to enliven the stage with such memorable plays as *Heartbreak House* and *St. Joan*, while the realistic play was kept alive by Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward with this important difference that they portrayed not the middle classes but the upper or leisured classes. Moreover, they were not concerned with the sociological problems such as those that interested Shaw and Galsworthy; they had no message to give or a thesis to prove. They provided only popular entertainment. Their plays were good theatre but not good drama. They had little literature.

Besides Maugham and Coward, there were other playwrights in the 30s who achieved fame on the strength of one or two plays each.

John Drinkwater was a poet and began his dramatic career with verse plays like *Cophetua*, *Rebellion*, *X=O* (all one-act plays) and *Mary Stuart*. But he made his mark by writing historical plays: *Abraham Lincoln*, *Robert E. Lee* and *Oliver Cromwell*. *Abraham Lincoln* won international reputation. The play covers the life of Lincoln from the moment of his decision to stand for Presidency to the night of his assassination in the Ford theatre, Washington.

Miss Clement Dane, the most talented of lady dramatists, is remembered by her very moving play *A Bill of Divorcement*.

R.C. Sherriff's war play *Journey's End* won world-wide fame. It is a straightforward story of soldiers at war without a tinge of anti-war propaganda. The most peculiar thing about the play is that it has no female character.

Rudolph Besier's *The Barrets of Wympole Street* on Mrs. Browning had astonishing success and started the fashion of biographical plays on literary men and women—Scott, Keats, the Brontes, Carlyle.

Mr. Clifford Bax and Mr. Ashley Dukes violently opposed realistic drama and wrote romantic plays.

Finally, there was the enigmatic figure of James Bridie who showed

unusual talent in his Biblical plays *Johan*, *Tobias* and *The Angel* and in *Marriage is No Joke*. His *Sleeping Clergyman* is still a puzzle. The clergyman snores loudly through a long story covering several generations. May be the somnolent priest is symbolic of the Church that is unconscious of or indifferent to the problems of life.

The divorce between theatrical skill and literature noticed in Maugham and Coward became more apparent in the 40s when the plays became prosaic and photographic in their trivial details. They did not *represent* life, but *reproduced* it—two different things. The only exceptions were the farcical comedies of Rattigan and the ingenious comedies of Ustinov.

Realistic prose drama had achieved such perfection as it was capable of in Ibsen and Galsworthy. Maugham and Coward, though they switched over to the upper-middle and upper classes broke no new ground. Their successors and imitators in the 40s repeated stock themes, stock characters and situations in plays written in bald naturalistic prose devoid of insight, intelligence and wit. Above all, these plays were entirely verbal—nothing but words, words, words. Such action, as they had, was tame in comparison with that of the cinema. Realistic drama in its zeal for realistic effects had stripped itself of all those elements of entertainment—verse, music, song, dance, spectacle—which are so necessary for a full-blooded dramatic experience.

Fortunately for drama there was at this time a successful revival of Shakespeare and other English classics—Webster, Congreve, Sheridan, Wilde. This was due principally to the famous actors and producers Gielgud and Olivier. The phenomenal box-office success of Shakespeare demonstrated that there are many other kinds of plays besides the realistic. Having seen how Shakespeare used the resources of 'total theatre', the younger writers were not slow in following his example though, as will presently appear, in most novel and unexpected ways.

The older realistic drama having fallen into a rut, fresh life and vigour was injected into it by new writers like Wesker, Delaney, Osborne and others who began in the 50s a new epoch—that of contemporary drama. Some of these writers have working class origins and their plays are concerned with the stresses and strains of their class. Some critics have called these plays Neo-Realistic, the new realism consisting in shabby settings—filthy streets, garrets, kitchen sinks etc.—in place of the fashionable drawing room. The plays are loose in structure not only because of their naturalistic technique but also because of the writers' inadequate education. Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) marks an epoch in the history of contemporary drama.

Far more important is the extension and novel use of 'total theatre'. Realising that mere speech is not enough *avant-garde* playwrights have not only revived the approved devices of music, song, clowning and other ritual of Shakespeare, but have added other techniques

borrowed from European sources. These include the Epic Theatre of Brecht, the Absurd Theatre of Ionesco and the Theatre of Cruelty demanded by Artaud.

The Epic or Narrative play of the German, Bertold Brecht (1898-1956), is based on the theory that drama is debate. It has a loose, flexible form designed for narration, argument, debate, and direct address to the audience on behalf of communism. Brecht's influence may be seen in the plays of John Arden, Robert Bolt, John Whiting and Peter Shaffer.

The concept of the Absurd was originated by Albert Camus (1913-60), the French existentialist philosopher and novelist, but it was popularised by the Parisian Eugene Ionesco (1912—). It was introduced in England in the fifties by Samuel Beckett (1906—) whose *Waiting for Godot* (1955) made theatrical history. Other British dramatists influenced by Ionesco are N.F. Simpson (1919—), James Saunders (1925—), and Harold Pinter (1930—).

The Absurd is defined as anything that militates against human happiness, reason, commonsense, justice.

Ionesco has repudiated all dramatic conventions and uses absurd objects and images to express his convictions of life's absurdities. For example, in *Chairs* (1951) he uses empty chairs to show man's empty existence; in *Rhinoceros* (1958) he introduces this monster to illustrate man's mania for conformity. A provincial town is filled with rhinoceroses, because all the inhabitants want to be turned into these ugly monsters. Perhaps the funniest illustration of conformity is provided by *Jack* (1950). Jack refuses to marry the girl chosen by his parents, because having only two noses she is not ugly enough. He eventually settles for another girl with three noses.

Ionesco's disciple Simpson presents a world of whimsical nonsense in his farce *One Way Pendulum* (1959) where a man teaches weighing machines to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. This is to illustrate man's slavery to machines.

Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty is the most novel and frightening development in the movement towards "total theatre". It is based on the theory that since drama has evolved from the primitive, frenzied ritual of violence and cruelty, the enactment of such barbaric ritual on the stage will bring to the surface man's hidden erotic, sadistic and anarchist instincts and thus serve as an outlet for these repressions. The greatest exponents of the theatre of cruelty are the French Jean Genet (1910—), the German Peter Weiss (1916—), and the Cuban Jose Triana (1931—). Their backgrounds support the view that they write from first-hand knowledge or experience of cruelty. Genet has been an outcast and criminal of Paris, Peter Weiss is a German refugee now settled in Sweden, and Triana is a child of Castro's revolution.

Genet's bitter scorn of society is reflected in such plays as *Death-watch*, *The Maids*, *The Balcony* and *The Blacks* which deal respec-

tively with murderers, despised servants, prostitutes and Negroes.

The Maids (1956) offers a good illustration of the sado-masochistic type of play. Two maids of a fine lady alternately play the role of mistress and maid, so that each can satisfy her feeling of revenge against the mistress. This ritual is repeated again and again. Later, when their plot to murder the mistress fails, one of the maids herself drinks the poisoned cup meant for the mistress.

Weiss's historical play *The Maratsade* (1964), whatever its merits as meeting the demands of the theatre of cruelty, is much too complex and grim to have wide appeal. His best is *The Investigation* (1965) which records the horrifying facts brought out by the Frankfurt trial of War Criminals.

In Triana's *The Criminals* (1967) the children of a family indulge in a repetitive ritual of murdering their detested parents. Later, the parents themselves are shown as detesting each other. This kind of domestic tension is the source of much of the juvenile (and adult) delinquency we hear of today.

This, however, does not mean that the theatre of crime and cruelty is the proper cure for social discontents. The effect of the horror film has been an increase in crime and violence; that of the horror play cannot be different. The claim that the audience's experience of cruelty on the stage has a cathartic effect is pure delusion. The Freudian theory of repressions is not gospel truth. In fact, it has done a lot of mischief and is now seriously disputed.

Luckily the theatre of cruelty as such has found little favour with British dramatists. Elements specifically cruel are found in two plays of Beckett. In *Waiting for Godot*, Lucky is used as a beast of burden and is beaten with a whip by his master Pozzo. In *Endgame*, Hamm keeps his aged crippled parents in dustbins. Strictly speaking these are examples or aspects of absurdity in what are avowedly Absurdist Plays.

Another novel development in contemporary theatre is the topical interpretation of Shakespeare exemplified in recent productions of such plays as the series *Wars of Roses* (1965-66) under the aegis of BBC by the Royal Shakespeare Company and in *Henry V* produced at Stratford and the Aldwych. This is due to the Polish Professor Kott who in his book *Shakespeare: Our Contemporary* maintains that the lust for power which lay behind the Nazi atrocities has its counterpart in feudal wars of the Roses.

Topicality, however, is not confined to Shakespeare productions. It is the dominant interest of many other plays of the 60s. Such, for example, are: (1) plays dealing with contemporary events, which correspond to the 'documentaries' of the cinema. Peter Weiss's *Investigation*, Kipphardt's *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Hasting's *Lee Harvey Oswald* and *US on the war in Vietnam* may be called documentaries of the stage; (2) plays critical of militarism, e.g. Macgarth's *Before Gun*, Vian's *The General's Tea Party*, Charles Wood's

Dingo; (4) plays dealing with the racial problem of black and white: South African Fugard's *The Black Knot*, American Robert Lowell's *Benito Cereno*, Saunders's *The Neighbours*; (5) plays depicting mental illness, nervous breakdown, etc. by Peter Nicholas, David Storey, Mercer and Mortimer; (6) plays which frankly portray sexual aberrations like homosexuality (Osborne's *A Patriot for Me*, 1965 and Dyer's *The Staircase*, 1966) and lesbianism (Marcus's *The Killing of Sister George* 1965); (7) plays which exhibit men disguised as women. The phenomenon known as 'Drag' may be seen in some of the scenes of Osborne's *The World of Paul Slickey* and *A Patriot for Me*. This is the reverse of what happens in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* where women impersonate men. The use of 'drag' in otherwise straight plays is obviously due to the current fashions in dress. Society women wear slacks, bell bottoms and hot pants. Fashionable young men affect feminine styles. This has blurred the distinction between the sexes. It is also said that men too often do not care for a woman's feelings and would only realise them if the man-woman roles were reversed. It is, in short, part of the 'lib game'—women's liberation movement.

Apart from some excellent plays for children, the only contribution to good drama in the immediate past has been Ayckbourn's comedy *Relatively Speaking* (1967).

A healthy feature of contemporary British drama is its cosmopolitan character by virtue of the welcome given to European, American and other foreign dramatists. The highlights of the period (1950-70) are the Shakespeare productions and the plays of Samuel Beckett. For the rest, contemporary drama is, by and large, journalistic, eccentric and experimental. The craze for techniques of 'total theatre' has widened the gap between the theatre and literature. Mere techniques, however novel, can make no meaningful contribution. The glamour of novelty does not last. In point of substance, contemporary drama reflects the post-war mood of anger and disillusionment. While reasons for cynicism and despair are plentiful, it is not the way of wisdom to lose hope. It is the undisputed right of the dramatist to expose what is baneful, but it is also his duty to hold up that which is to be cherished. Mere negation or contentiousness is not a sound foundation for great drama. What is needed is a dramatist of clear and comprehensive vision who can restore to the stage the spirit of affirmation—the spirit, that is to say, of faith, courage and compassion.

CHAPTER 48

THE PLAYWRIGHTS

Ibsen—Shaw—Galsworthy—Barrie—Maugham—Beckett—Osborne.

In our rapid survey of 20th century drama, we did not stop to consider at length some of the greater figures in the chain of development—Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. We shall now notice them in some detail; in the case of others—Maugham, Beckett, Osborne—it should be enough to summarise some of their important plays.

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) was the son of a middle class merchant in the small town of Skien, Norway. His father's business failed when the boy was eight and his early years were of poverty and hardship. At school he was shy, sullen and solitary, and throughout his life he remained almost friendless because of his unsociable nature. At fifteen he was apprenticed to a chemist. After serving his apprenticeship for five years he lived two or three years in Oslo, the capital, trying to earn his living by writing. He acquired his theatrical experience in the capacity of manager first of the National Theatre in Bergen and then of the Norwegian Theatre in the capital. From the very beginning Ibsen was a heretic and rebel and attacked traditional opinions and civilized conventions. In *Love's Comedy*, a slight play in rhymed verse, he exposed romantic love as well as the absurdities of Norwegian customs of public betrothal and permanent marriage. This made him so unpopular that he had to leave the country and live in Italy. The change of scene and climate, however, relaxed him and gave his mind a sense of peace.

In 1865, appeared *Brand* and in 1867 *Peer Gynt*, both poetic plays which made Ibsen famous throughout Europe. He was awarded a poet's pension. Next came his social satires in prose of which the more important are: *Pillars of Society* (1876), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1882), *Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *The Master Builder* (1892).

A Doll's House and *Ghosts* were sensations throughout Europe, and Ibsen was abused everywhere. His later plays beginning with *Wild Duck* are marked by symbolism, mysticism and fantasy. They

have been differently interpreted and no two persons agree upon their meaning. Ibsen's earlier plays dealing with history, legend and folklore are unimportant.

It is difficult to convey adequately the force of Ibsen's impact on the drama of the time, not only in England but in other countries of Europe. France, considered the leader in European drama, was producing the "well-made play", its great practitioners being Scribe and Sardou. The "well-made play" was written according to a prescribed formula which consisted in an artificial plot—romantic or improbable—designed to entertain the audience. The matter was an elegant trifle meant to titillate bored people, the excellence of the play consisting in craftsmanship, in strict conformity with the rules of Aristotle.

Attempts to produce the "thesis play" were made by the independent theatres of France and Germany, but the hero of the revolt against the classical drama was Ibsen. After Robertson, he was the first dramatist to relate drama to actual life by his bold presentation on the stage of current social problems in the naturalistic manner. He adapted the technique of the "well-made play" to the needs of his "thesis play". He was the first to introduce minute stage directions, a practice which has been carried to extremes by Shaw. A happy compromise between the nominal stage directions of classical drama and the elaborate ones of modern drama is represented by Galsworthy. Another innovation introduced by Ibsen was the abandonment of soliloquy and asides as being incongruous in realistic plays.

Ibsen was essentially a poet who was concerned with eternal and fundamental truths. As a critic of society he is content to diagnose the disease, to expose an evil; but he does not prescribe a remedy. Galsworthy resembles him in this respect, while Shaw, who has a remedy for every social ill, is frankly propagandist. The one grave defect of Ibsen is his humourlessness. His solitariness explains the overseriousness of his plays. More harm is sometimes done by solemnity than by gaiety.

As will be seen from the plays summarised below the problems of which Ibsen treats are not merely of local but of universal significance: the problem of religious faith without love (*Brand*), the redeeming power of love (*Peer Gynt*), the status of women (*A Doll's House*), the influence of heredity (*Ghosts*), the importance of truth in our dealings with others (*Pillars of Society*), the loneliness of the conscientious man (*The Enemy of the People*). Some of the ideas involved are highly controversial, the most controversial being the status of women, which is the basis of the current agitation known as Women's Lib.

Brand. Brand, a priest, has nothing but contempt for the half-hearted, compromising spirit of the religious faith of his countrymen. His criterion of faith is all-out sacrifice of self—"All or nothing". He refuses to visit his dying mother, a rich widow, just because she

is unwilling to part with all her property—she would give only nine-tenths. He imposes the same test on everybody including himself and it costs him the life, first of his child and then of his wife. He spends all his inheritance in building a new church, but at the last moment abandons its inauguration because no church, he says, is big enough to house God whose church is the wide earth with the vault of heavens above it. Faith cannot be separated from life. The two must melt together. In the end the people who had acclaimed him as their redeemer, revolt against him and drive him out into the wilderness of snow. In despair, he cries out to God for an answer to the riddle of faith and salvation. The answer, a voice from thunder is: "He is the God of love." Brand is crushed and buried under an avalanche.

Peer Gynt. Peer Gynt is what one might call a charming rogue. A lazy, quixotic braggart, he is dissipated and feckless without faith or conscience. His philosophy is to be always himself; to regard himself and his only, without being bothered with the concerns of others. Abandoning the good girl Solveig who loves him, he abducts Ingrid, another's bride, almost from her bridal bed. He is outlawed. Thereafter he is shown in various episodes, including his association with trolls or fairy dwarfs. Neglecting his farm, he suffers his old mother to die broken-hearted by his escapades. In the last two acts he appears in Egypt as the owner of a yacht, a rich businessman who has made a fortune in slave trade. His friends and admirers, as unscrupulous as he, rob him and sail away in his yacht. He then assumes the role of a prophet and dallies with the Arab maiden Anitra. In the end he returns an old disillusioned man to Norway where the button-moulder regards him as a lost soul, useless, waste metal that must be melted up for fresh raw material. To escape this fate he runs into the arms of Solveig, who has been waiting for him all these years, and is redeemed by her love and faith.

Pillars of Society. Karsten Bernick, a shipbuilder, is regarded as a pillar of society, having risen to topmost position in his town by his business abilities coloured by a show of moral excellence and philanthropy. He has married Betty because of her fortune and jilted her elder half-sister Lona whom he loved, because of public opinion which was outraged by her advanced or unorthodox opinions and dress, etc. He had seduced a married actress but Johan, the younger brother of Betty, had taken the guilt upon himself and sailed away to America where Lona followed him. Thereafter, Bernick helped to spread the rumour that Johan had stolen a large sum of money from his firm. This enabled him to tide over a financial crisis, for his creditors believing in his honesty gave him grace of time. The prosperous Bernick then enters into a deal with other businessmen of the town and secretly buys up at a cheap price all the properties—forests and mining areas—lying along the route of a projected branch line of a railway to the town.

Unfortunately for him Johan and Lona return from America after an absence of fifteen years. Fearing exposure of his real charac-

ter, Bernick makes a full public confession of his career of hypocrisy and deceit, and decides to begin a new era. As Lona tells him: "The spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom—they are the pillars of society."

The play also glances at the denial of freedom to women and children.

A Doll's House. Torvald Helmer and Mrs. Helmer have been married eight years and have three children. Helmer has been promoted manager of the bank in which he has been serving, but his happiness is threatened by blackmail. In order to enable her husband to make a trip to Italy—which alone, the doctors said, could save his life—Mrs. Helmer had secretly taken a loan from Nils Krogstad, a clerk with shady antecedents in Helmer's bank. He had insisted on the security of her father, but since he was very ill, she spared him and forged his signature on the bond. Acting on instructions left by the outgoing manager Helmer has dismissed Krogstad. Thereupon Krogstad threatens to publish the forgery if he is not reinstated. This throws Helmer into consternation. He who had been such a loving and indulgent husband suddenly changes his attitude and tells his wife that all is over between them and he would no longer allow a deceitful mother to bring up the children. While he is still denouncing her, he receives from Krogstad an envelope containing the bond, and a letter explaining that a happy change in his life—reunion with a former sweetheart—had changed his mind. The fear being over, Helmer changes his tune and pleads with his wife for reconciliation. She has, however, made up her mind to leave the 'doll's house' and seek her education in the freer world outside. She leaves her husband because he would not sacrifice his honour for her sake—her whom he had professed to love so dearly. He had loved her as a doll, a plaything, not for herself—as an individual, as a serious and responsible person.

Ghosts. The theme of this play is the influence of heredity. Incidentally it also deals, like *A Doll's House*, with the status of women—how different standards are applied to fallen women and fallen men.

Mrs. Alving is a victim of misalliance. She was forced to marry a man with a fortune, though she had set her heart on another. Alving was a hopelessly lost man, an incorrigible profligate. Mrs. Alving in sheer disgust ran away, but Manders the pastor, forced her back to her duty as a wife. Her son Oswald, an artist, has come home from Paris with unconventional opinions and attempts to seduce Regina the housemaid. In this affair, Mrs. Alving sees 'ghosts' of Alving and Joana, the former housemaid and mother of Regina. Alving had seduced Joana and Regina was his child. Oswald insists on marrying Regina, but Mrs. Alving is too cowardly to permit the union, although she says that there must be thousands of married couples whose relationship was as near as theirs. She reveals the truth and Regina is sent away. As Oswald has taken after his father, so Regina takes after her mother. She too has the joy of life in her and is going to find an outlet for it in a poor sailors' home

to be called the 'Alving Home' in memory of the late Alving.

The influence of heredity hangs like a dark cloud over the whole play. Mrs. Alving, anxious that Oswald should not come into the tainted property of his father, uses it to build and endow an Orphanage as a monument to her husband. The orphanage, however, is accidentally burnt down a day before its inauguration. There is, it seems, a curse on everything connected with Alving. The remainder of the capital is made over to Manders who in collaboration with Eugstrand, Regina's putative father, builds the aforesaid 'Alving Home'.

After his disappointment over Regina, Oswald is afflicted with a hysterical fit resulting from softening of the brain. The play ends with Mrs. Alving standing undecided whether to give him, as he had asked, the morphia powders she is holding in her hands, to end his pain. "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children."

An Enemy of the People. Dr. Stockmann, medical officer of the Municipal Baths of a Norwegian town, makes the shocking discovery that the water supply of the town is infected with typhus germs. The Baths attract a large number of outsiders and account in a large measure for the prosperity of the town. The doctor, however, is too conscientious to play with human lives and in spite of the united opposition of the town makes his discovery public. He is dismissed, manhandled, boycotted and by a resolution at a public meeting branded "an enemy of the people." He consoles himself with the thought "that the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone."

There is little doubt that this play was Ibsen's reply to the shocked protests of the whole of Europe over the revelations made in *Ghosts*. He had spoken unpalatable truths and was therefore an enemy of the people.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) came of a poor middle-class Protestant family of Dublin which boasted of some vague aristocratic connections. He received desultory education in schools, but his best asset was the training in music which he received from his mother, a music teacher. After serving as a clerk in an estate agent's office he came to London at the age of 20 to seek his fortune. Very little is known of his early years in London, except that he subsisted by his music. Becoming aware of his literary powers he wrote during the early 80s five novels: *Immaturity*, *The Irrational Knot*, *Love among the Artists*, *Cashel Byron's Profession*, and *An Unsocial Socialist*. Not one of them succeeded. They were re-printed only when the author had become famous.

Having imbibed socialistic opinions from Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* and Karl Marx's *Das Capital*, Shaw joined the Fabian society where he shone as a powerful debater and soon won influential friends including Sidney Webb (later Lord Passfield). From 1888 to 1894, he contributed music criticisms to two fashionable papers, and from 1895 to 1898 dramatic criticisms to *The Saturday Review*.

In 1891, he published *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. He made his debut as a dramatist with *Widowers' Houses* which was staged in 1892. In this he attacked those who made huge incomes from slum property. His next acted play was *Arms and the Man* (1894). It gave offence in high places by its satire on the Army. In 1898, he published two volumes of *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*. The 'Pleasant' plays are *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny* and *You Never Can Tell*; those called 'Unpleasant' are *Widowers' Houses*, *The Philanderer* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. In 1901 appeared *Three Plays for Puritans*, the plays being *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *The Devil's Disciple* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. In 1903 came *Man and Superman* which is sub-titled "A Comedy and a Philosophy." Then in 1904 *Candida* was produced in New York. Its great success encouraged Granville Barker and J.E. Vedrenne, manager of the Court Theatre, to give there between 1904 and 1907 a series of productions including Shaw which made him the greatest figure in the contemporary world of drama. Hitherto his plays were only read, from now on the way was open for their staging. In 1907 appeared a volume containing *John Bull's Other Island* and *Major Barbara*. The latter which debunks the Salvation Army is one of Shaw's great plays. Shaw was now fifty, but he had demoniac energy and continued writing almost till the end of his life. The plays of this later period have generally more thesis than drama and are more wordy. The more important of them are: *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Getting Married*, *The Shewing up of Blanco Posnet* (all 1911); *Misalliance*, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, *Fanny's First Play* (all 1914); *Androcles and the Lion*, *Overruled*, *Pygmalion* (all 1916); *Heartbreak House* (1919); *Back to Methuselah* (1921); *Saint Joan* (1924); *The Apple Cart* (1930); *Too True to be Good* (1934); *On the Rocks* and *Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935).

Like Goldsmith, Sheridan and Oscar Wilde, Shaw was Irish and a writer of comedy. His comedy, however, is not their comedy of manners. The Shavian Comedy is a class by itself and is like nothing in English or continental drama. To call him an English Moliere, as some do, is to mistake him as well as the Frenchman. The Shavian Comedy is a comedy of ideas. The lead in this kind was given by Ibsen, but while ideas are implicit in Ibsen's plays, they constitute the very stuff of Shaw's. They are dramatised dialogue. Everything else—plot, action, character—is sacrificed to disquisition, discussion, argument. The plot in Shaw's plays is of the thinnest, action nominal. Practically nothing happens. In plays like *Getting Married*, *Misalliance*, *Too True to be Good*, the characters just sit down and talk. The success of Shaw's plays on the screen brought him a fortune. In fact, they may be said to be the only real 'talkies' in the film world. When Shaw senses that the talk has become a bore, he introduces a diversion to pad it out. In *Heartbreak House* the diversion is provided by the entry of a burglar and the crash of a bomb in the garden. In *The Apple Cart* the deficiency of action is made up by the interpolation of two wholly unnecessary and irrelevant incidents—the King's visit to his mistress and the visit of the American Ambassador with a fantastic message. None of these incidents is realistic; but realism is not

necessary to Shaw's purpose. In *Man and Superman*, a long scene is shifted to Hell; in *Too True to be Good* he introduces a microbe; and certain scenes in *Back to Methuselah* are the farthest remote from reality. Shaw is equally indifferent to anachronisms. Imagine Cleopatra quoting Shelley; Joan of Arc and some others in *Saint Joan* utter modern sentiments that would be utterly inconceivable in the Middle Ages.

As regards characters, they are mere puppets whose strings are moved by Shaw. They have no independent existence and are there simply to mouth the opinions of their creator with the utmost volubility. Perhaps the only characters a close reader may remember are Marchbanks, Burgess, Eliza Doolittle, Enry Straker and Undershaft. Shaw lacked the essential gift of the true dramatist—psychological insight, the ability to enter adequately into the minds of others. He was, however, a skilled stage technician and adapted the conventional technique of the "well-made play" to the requirements of his drama of ideas.

It is obviously impossible to deal with all Shaw's plays individually—big and small they number nearly fifty—but some general statements about them can be ventured. Taken in the mass, they expound a social philosophy which is disconcerting enough, but which is presented with such eloquence, wit and humour that one doesn't mind its outrages and irreverences. Shaw was a thorough-going rationalist who denied the validity of everything that cannot stand the test of reason. Anti-romantic and anti-sentimental he pushed his logic to its extreme and sometimes shocking conclusions. He delights in raillery, banter, satire and paradox. To give only one example: Undershaft, the canon maker in *Major Barbara*, says: "I had rather be a thief than a pauper; I had rather be a murderer than a slave. I don't want to be either; but if you force the alternative on me, then, by Heaven, I'll choose the braver and more moral one." He challenged the entire fabric of British society and ridiculed all its cherished beliefs, ideals and institutions. In the beginning, the public was scandalized, but soon it got accustomed to his ways. The English laughed with him in the theatre but at him outside. They took him for a buffoon, a mountebank, and did not take him seriously. And yet the fact was that Shaw was in dead earnest. If he failed to move the British jolterhead, he had himself to blame. He defeated his purpose by excessive levity. If Galsworthy was too solemn, Shaw was too light-hearted.

Shaw's principal philosophy is that of Life Force which he summed up in *Man and Superman*. Life Force is the force in or behind evolution which is for ever striving to attain higher and higher state of existence. So far its most wonderful achievement is man. Man, however, is at present in a state of stagnation because of his mental dullness. Unless he shakes off this stupor, clears his mind of cobwebs of superstition and delusion and cooperates with Life Force in the march of evolution to a higher state of manhood, that of Superman, Life Force will abandon him and evolve some other creature who will respond to its purpose. In short, evolution has reached a stage when

man must lend a hand and make it Creative Evolution. The doctrine of the Life Force figures again in *Back to Methuselah* and *Heartbreak House*.

Shaw had begun as an atheist who is reported to have challenged God to strike him dead. Fortunately God did not accept the challenge, presumably because He decided to give Shaw more time to revise his opinion. And revise it he did. After the War of 1914 a change came over his attitude to God and religion. He recognised that religion depends on faith which is beyond logic or argument. This attitude he projected in *Back to Methuselah* (1921) and *Saint Joan* (1924). *Back to Methuselah* is five plays rolled into one. Its action begins in the Garden of Eden and stretches to the remotest future. In it, Shaw imagines a man who attains to perfect wisdom by longevity and in the end, liberated from physical bondage, becomes pure intelligence, a spirit or god. In *Saint Joan*, Joan of Arc is martyred because she asserts the authority of personal faith against the authority of the church. Indeed, the change is hinted at as early as *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1911). Jennifer says to Dr. Ridgeon: "Doctors think they hold the keys of life and death; but it is not their will that is fulfilled." In *Too True to be good* (1934) the doctor in his conversation with the microbe refers to "that mysterious power that gives us our life and that none of us knows anything about."

Apart from these plays, all external evidence, much of it furnished by Shaw's secretary Miss Blanche Patch (*Thirty Years with G.B.S.*) points to the conclusion that Shaw had come to identify the mysterious power which he called Life Force with "an omnipotent and benevolent God." To quote Miss Patch: "In short, he accepted by instinct a truth he could not reach by reason." He rejected Christian theology and dogma, but had aesthetic admiration for the Bible and the Prayer Book and great respect for the Christian ethic. He extolled religion and denounced science. "Religion", he said, "is always right. Religion solves every problem and thereby abolishes problems from the Universe. Religion gives us certainty, stability, peace, and the absolutes. It protects us against that progress which we all dread. Science is the very opposite. Science is always wrong. It never solves a problem without raising ten more problems" (*Ibid.*, p. 193).

In 1930, Shaw surprised the world by coming up with a defence of monarchy in *The Apple Cart*. He defends the King for the same reasons as those which he had advanced years before in favour of dictatorship in the *Fabian Essays*. The King has no fear of elections and can, therefore, push through reforms speedily. "An able dictator", he said on one occasion, "can effect reform in six months that parliament would wrangle about for 60 years" (*Ibid.*, p. 172). *On the Rocks* (1935) shows this ineffectiveness of parliaments. Sir Arthur Chavender, a liberal, is Prime Minister of Britain heading a coalition. He has an unemployment agitation on his hands, but fearing a nervous breakdown takes a holiday. He reads Marx and becomes a convert to socialism. On his return he gives his Guildhall audience "a

dose of boiling socialism." He has proposed nationalisation of land with compensation to the owners. Nationalisation is opposed by vested interests and compensation by Labour. The result is the break-up of the National Government. The play ends with the noise of the agitating mob outside the P.M.'s residence.

Before writing *On the Rocks*, Shaw had visited Russia—the Russia of Stalin. In the preface to the play he seems to think that the best way to deal with those who defy authority is to liquidate them as they do in Russia. Shaw had made a nuisance of himself during the 1914-18 war and one wonders what would have happened to him if the British Government had pursued the Russian policy.

In his socialist propaganda, Shaw is most insistent on eradication of poverty which he regards as the greatest of all crimes, since all other evils flow from it. Criticizing the Salvation Army he says it's no use preaching religion to starving bodies. Undershaft says: "Don't preach at them; don't reason with them. Kill them." For the rest, there is hardly any aspect of modern civilization, particularly of British society which has escaped Shaw's mockery. He has attacked even such things as meat-eating, tea-drinking, smoking, vivisection and vaccination. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* deals with the problem of prostitution; *The Doctor's Dilemma* with the medical profession ("the ignorant licensed murderers"); *Arms and the Man* and *Too true to be Good* with war and soldiering; *Getting Married*, *Misalliance*, and *Heartbreak House* with marriage. He delights in standing everything on its head. In *Candida* woman is shown as the stronger sex and in *Man and Superman* as the pursuer of man. "Marriage", he says in this play, "is the most licentious of institutions."

His unorthodox, often revolutionary, views on morality are scattered throughout his plays. Undershaft tells Barbara to scrap the old morality and religion like obsolete dynamos and steam engines, and replace them with new ones. In *The Doctor's Dilemma* the painter Dubedat, who is a bigamist and a thorough blackguard, says to his mentors: "All your moralizings have no use for me. I don't believe in morality. I'm a disciple of Bernard Shaw." Again, "I don't believe there is such a thing as sin." The play ridicules not only doctors, but the court, the aristocracy, Methodists and Christian Scientists. *Too True to be Good* is a satire not only on war but on clergymen, science and morals generally. "If I become an honest man", says Aubrey, the clergyman, "I shall become a poor man; and then nobody will respect me: nobody will admire me: nobody will say thank you to me. If on the contrary I am bold, unscrupulous, acquisitive, successful and rich, every one will respect me, admire me, court me, grovel before me. Then no doubt I shall be able to afford the luxury of honesty. I learnt that from my religious education. . . and then I shall retire and be a saint." Mrs. Mopplay sums up Shaw's view of Reality when she says, "How am I to believe in a world that's just the opposite of everything I was told about it?"

No wonder Shaw's plays together with his blustering public utterances created many misconceptions about the man. The fact was that

there were two Shaws. His public image differed completely from his private image. To the public he appeared a self-glorifying and cantankerous bounder; in private life he was a quiet, kindly recluse. He attacked conventional morality and yet was one of the most moral of men. He laughed at the institution of marriage but he was legally married. He was supposed to be irreligious, and yet he was deeply religious. He was a vegetarian and lived the ascetic life of a Puritan. It is certainly true he was rather cold, aloof and lacking in warmth. But he was not devoid of poetic feeling and human emotion, as may be seen from such plays as *Candida*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *St. Joan*, and *The Apple Cart*. He was a humorist who delighted in paradox. He did not always mean what he said. He resorted to exaggeration and extremes of statements in order to awaken the public to an awareness of a problem and to the need of a solution. And he had a ready-made solution for everything. In these matters, he was irrepensible. He would have been more effective with reserve of emphasis. His plays are dramatised propaganda. Perhaps the only plays which are genuine drama are *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *Pygmalion*, *St. Joan* and *The Apple Cart*.

Shaw was a self-educated man and overflowed with ideas. Most of these were borrowed from others—his subversive morality from Samuel Butler, his socialism from Marx, his philosophy of Life Force from Lamarck and Bergson, and his Superman from Nietzsche. He was neither a philosopher nor a prophet. His originality consists in expounding his borrowed ideas with a lucidity and brilliance beyond his originals. His kind of drama—the drama of ideas—is a unique thing in English literature. The fact that his plays are propagandist is certainly a defect, but it is a defect which is redeemed by their value as first-rate intellectual entertainment. He will endure as the most brilliant writer of dialectical prose in English.

Arms and the Man (1894). The play ridicules the popular romantic conception of the professional soldier's courage and incidentally the pretensions of the aristocracy.

A war is on between Bulgaria and Serbia in the 1880s. Raina, a young, rich and beautiful Bulgarian lady is betrothed to Sergius Saranoff an officer in the Bulgarian army, and is thrilled to hear the news that he has won a glorious battle. Her romantic notions of his bravery, and of the fearlessness of soldiers, however, receive a jolt from the revelations made by a Swiss soldier of the Serbian army, Captain Bluntschli, who fleeing from the battlefield—the scene of Sergius's victory—takes refuge in Raina's bedroom at night. Seeing him in abject terror she hides him behind a curtain and saves his life from his pursuers. Noticing that she was surprised at his fear for his life, he tells her that all soldiers are afraid to die. It's only the younger ones who are keen on fighting; the older know better, they keep grub in their pockets. He himself carried not cartridges but chocolate cakes all of which he had finished hours ago. Seeing he is famished, Raina gives him some chocolate creams. When she mentions Sergius's victory he tells her it was a fluke inasmuch as the Serbs were given

the wrong ammunition and couldn't fire a single round. Charmed by his manners Raina brings her mother Catherine on the scene, but finding him fast asleep in Raina's bed they retire. In the morning he is helped to escape, disguised in a coat belonging to Major Petcoff who is away on the front.

The war ending, Major Petcoff returns home where he is joined by Sergius. Raina having gone into the house to fetch her hat for a walk with Sergius, he makes love to her maid Louka, a proud peasant girl who is jealous of Raina. Raina sees the love-making from a window and is completely disillusioned about her idol—his honour, nobility and chivalry. He reveals that he has resigned his commission out of disgust at the iniquitous promotions. He was left out because he had won a battle the wrong way, while others, who had lost their campaigns the right way had been promoted. Moreover, he adds, soldiering is the coward's art of taking your enemy at a disadvantage and never fighting him on equal terms.

Captain Bluntschili visits the Petcoffs ostensibly to return the coat, but really to have another look at Raina. Major Petcoff finds in his coat pocket a portrait of Raina inscribed "Raina, to her chocolate cream soldier."

Though Petcoff and Sergius had both heard the story of Bluntschili's adventure from army gossip, they did not know that it related to Petcoff's house. The discovery of the photograph clears up the mystery and resolves the plot. Sergius repudiates his betrothal and takes the scheming Louka. B formally proposes to be a suitor for Raina's hand, but Catherine and Sergius object to the match on the ground of Raina's superiority in wealth and rank. At this B takes out a paper from an envelope and reels off a long list of possessions he has come into by the recent death of his father. These include 200 horses (against Sergius's 20), 70 carriages (against Sergius's 3), six palatial hotels, three hundred servants, no end of table-cloths, bed-sheets, spoons and forks, etc. besides a tea garden, a private house and four medals for distinguished services. As for his rank, he adds, his is the highest known in Switzerland—that of a free citizen. This reply silences his flabbergasted objectors.

Candida (1895). The Reverend James Mavor Morrel, a Christian Socialist, is a parson of the Anglican church in the east end of London. He is 40, robust, hearty and handsome; having oratorical gifts he is a very popular preacher of sermons. His wife Candida, 33, and extremely beautiful, has come back from a holiday to fetch some clothing for one of the children. She is accompanied by Eugene Marchbanks, a frail and effeminate boy of 18 whom Morrel had picked up from the Embankment. Nephew of an Earl, he is a bit of a poet and has runaway from Oxford. Alone with Morrel he tells him that he (Eugene) and Candida are kindred spirits, that Candida despises him (Morrel) in her heart, and that he would rescue her from his clergyman's ideas. Morrel is provoked by this talk, lays violent hands on Eugene and asks him to leave his house. They are

interrupted by the entrance of Candida. She admits she shares Eugene's poetic ideas and would like to teach him love, for she fears he may learn it from a bad woman. Morrel says he has perfect confidence in her 'goodness and purity'. To this she replies that it was not goodness and purity but her love for Morrel that restrained her.

Morrel had cancelled an engagement to lecture at a meeting of the Guild of St. Matthew to have a free night at home with his wife. On Candida's insistence, however, he decides to go. He takes with him all others in the house—his father-in-law Burgess, his curate Alexander Mill and his secretary Proserpine Garnett—except Candida and Eugene. This he does to show his confidence in his wife.

Returning after a couple of hours he finds Eugene lying on the hearthrug across the knees of Candida. Though nothing has happened, Eugene insists that Candida returns his love and he challenges Morrel to let her choose between the two. Candida asks them to bid for her. Morrel offers his strength and dignity, and Eugene his weakness and desolation. Candida gives herself to the weaker of the two viz. Morrel. She explains that for all his talk of strength and dignity, Morrel is really a big baby who would be helpless without her. It is she who builds a castle of comfort and indulgence and love and protects him from all vulgar cares and annoyances. She consoles Eugene by reminding him of the difference of 15 years between their ages. Eugene departs carrying the poet's secret in his heart (that love is ageless).

Man and Superman (1903). John Tanner, Octavius Robinson, and Ann Whitefield form the eternal triangle of the love plot, which as usual, is a very thin and unrealistic one, designed to illustrate the doctrine of the Life Force. The two young men, both handsome and accomplished, are friends and have known Ann from childhood, Octavius, artistic and romantic is truly and intensely in love with Ann; but she prefers Tanner, author of *The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion*. Cynical and amusing, he scandalizes respectable people by his outrageous views (Shaw's own). He flees from Ann, but she pursues him and ultimately catches him in her coils as a spider catches a fly. Act III, lengthy and fantastic, is placed in Hell, where in a dialogue with the Devil, Don Juan (Tanner) expounds the philosophy of the Life Force and the Superman.

In the sub-plot Octavius's sister Violet secretly marries Hector Malone, son of an American businessman who has made millions by manufacturing office furniture. The millionaire father wants Hector to marry a titled lady and threatens to cut off supplies if he marries the middle class Violet. He, however, capitulates before the independent spirit displayed by Hector and the charms of Violet.

The play belongs to the early 20th century when the motor car was a novelty; and we are shown the New Man in Straker, the expert chauffeur of Tanner's car.

Some points in Don Juan's philosophy of the Life Force:

Life Force is the force that ever strives to attain greater and greater power of contemplating itself.

Man is the most marvellous achievement of the Life Force. Huger animals like mammoth and megatherium perished because they lacked brain and did not know how to carry out their purpose.

What man needs now is inner vision or mind's eye which sees the purpose of life and enables him to carry it out.

At present man is the prisoner of respectability which is nothing but stupidity and cowardice. His mind being clouded, man thwarts the purpose of life by setting up narrow personal ends.

By carrying out life's purpose man can develop into Superman, the ideal being: ommipotent, ommiscient, infallible, and completely self-conscious.

To woman, man is nothing but an instrument of Nature's purpose of perpetuating the species. She can sacrifice man to fulfil that purpose. Life Force cares not at all for honour, chastity and other conventional values. "Nature is immoral."

*Pygmalion** (1916). Henry Higgins, Professor of Phonetics and author of *Higgin's Universal Alphabet*, picks up from the streets Eliza Doolittle, an untidy flower girl, puts her up in his house in Wimpole Street, and trains her in speech so efficiently that after six months he passes her off as a duchess at a garden party. Higgins though kind-hearted is a bully and Eliza does not like him. She has learnt good manners from Colonel Pickering, another linguist who has come to stay with Higgins. Both are confirmed old bachelors and there is no question of Eliza marrying either of them. A kind of love-hate relationship has, nevertheless, developed between Eliza and Higgins and though she refuses to live in his house any longer, she can't keep away from it altogether. Freddy Hill, son of a poor family with social pretensions falls in love with Eliza and they get married. They are set up in a florist's shop which later develops into a greengrocer's. The shop is not much of a success, but the couple have a generous friend in Col. Pickering who helps them out of their financial troubles.

The fortunes of Eliza's father Mr. Doolittle provide a minor but very interesting sub-plot. He calls on Higgins to claim his daughter but is content to demand and accept £5 for her. He is a dustman by profession but ekes out his earnings by touching people for little bits of money to have a nice time. He describes himself as one of 'the undeserving poor' neglected by the middle-class morality. Higgins offered him ten pounds, but he took only five, for ten pounds, he said, was too much money and would make him save and be prudent like the middle class. That would be goodbye to happiness and freedom.

*Pygmalion, a king of Cyprus, was also a sculptor. He fell in love with a woman's statue he had made. In answer to his prayers Aphrodite gave it life.

Impressed by his philosophy, Higgins as a joke recommended dust-man Doolittle as the most original moralist of England to a rich American who was giving five million to found moral reform societies all over the world. To show that Americans recognised merit regardless of class, the millionaire left Doolittle three thousand a year on condition that he would give up to six lectures a year for the Wannafeller Moral Reform World League.

Though he does not decline the legacy, Doolittle finds his promotion to the status of a middle class gentleman uncomfortable. Formerly he was free to touch everybody, now others including scores of relatives touched him. Doctors who would not waste any attention on him before now found him suffering from all kinds of ailments. Worst of all, he was now compelled to marry the woman he had been living with so long. All this he blames upon Higgins.

Heartbreak House (1919). The play is aptly sub-titled "A Phantasia in the Russian Manner on British Themes." The eccentric old Captain Shotover lives with his daughter Hesione in a house in Sussex built like the stern of a high-pooped ship. He makes his living by making and selling nautical inventions. He wants to attain the seventh degree of concentration in order to invent a highly destructive weapon. Hesione's handsome husband Hector is an idler running after women.

Ellie Dunn is visiting Hesione at her invitation and is soon joined by Lady Utterword, Hesione's younger sister accompanied by her husband's brother Randall, another philanderer madly in love with her. Ellie's father Mazzini has been rescued from bankruptcy by Alf. Mangan, a rich, elderly government boss, and she is going to marry him out of gratitude. Meanwhile she has fallen in love with Hector who has impressed her by tall stories of his bravery. When she discovers that he is the husband of her hostess she becomes heart-broken. Hence the name of the house. There are other heart-breaks. Ariadne (Lady Utterword) breaks the hearts of Hector and Randall and Hesione that of Mangan who is dropped by Ellie.

Besides the horse-play of love-making, there is a desultory discussion of British politics, society, business, marriage, etc. The central idea—if such a phrase can be used in this hotch-potch—is that the British ship of state, steered by a muddled captain, is heading for the rocks. The situation becoming boring, two diversions are introduced. A burglar enters, gets caught and ends up with a collection towards setting up a blacksmith's shop. A little later in the night there is aerial bombing. A bomb dropped in the garden kills Mangan and the burglar who had taken shelter in the gravel pit stored with dynamite. This is a symbolic fulfilment of Hector's prophecy uttered earlier that the heavens would send forth a new species to supplant mankind.

The play is formless and loose in construction.

St. Joan (1924). The period is early 15th century when France was a vassal kingdom owing allegiance to the English King Henry VI.

Joan, a French peasant girl, saw divine visions and heard voices of St. Catherine, St. Margaret and angel Michael, commanding her to dress and don armour as a soldier and drive the English out of France. Obeying God's command she persuades Captain Baudricourt, a military squire, to array her as a soldier, lend a horse and send her to the Dauphin, escorted by a few soldiers. Reaching Chinon where the Dauphin was, she picks him out of a crowd of courtiers, thus proving to the sceptical court that she was indeed endowed with the miraculous powers she was reputed to possess. All the knights follow her to Orleans which was besieged by the English. Dunois, the young French Commander, is impressed when on her arrival the wind changed and brought his troops upstream. Leading them, Joan raised the siege and rapidly took some other towns. After these victories she crowned the Dauphin king of France in the cathedral of Rheims. Proceeding, against all advice, to take Paris she is captured by the Burgundians and sold to the English. The English say she is a witch, but she is tried as a heretic by the Bishop's court in conjunction with the Inquisition.

She is accused of the arch heresy of 'Protestantism' i.e., protest against interference by church in a matter of personal faith. In other words, the charge was that she had set up her own judgment against that of the Church in interpreting her revelations. She asserted the visions and voices were from God, while her accusers maintained that they were from the devil. Terrified by the prospect of burning at the stake, she recants at first, but when after this she is still condemned to solitary confinement for life she tears up the paper of recantation, preferring even horrible death to denial of freedom, freedom to "hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind."

She was burnt at Rouen on the 30th of May 1431. Twenty-five years later, in 1456, the church of Rome declared her innocent and denounced her judges as corrupt and malicious.

The idea of the play was suggested to Shaw when in 1920 the Roman Church canonised Joan of Arc as Saint Joan.

The Apple Cart (1930), sub-titled "a political extravaganza" is a defence of monarchy. The country is faced with a crisis which brings to a head the tussle for supremacy between King and Cabinet. The Cabinet realizes with alarm that though they have flattened all other parties and have been in power for three years, it is the King who has been in effective control of the country. He makes speeches in which he alludes to his veto and carries on a press campaign on his own. King Magnus is intelligent, affable and strong, but his power derives largely from the weakness of his cabinet. This is made clear at the Cabinet meeting by the squabbling among the Ministers. They have no policy and "everybody plays for his own hand." They present an ultimatum to the King requiring him to sign a pledge that he will make no speeches, stop his press propaganda and never

allude to his veto. The King defends his veto on the ground that he must warn the people when the government is leading the country to disaster. The advantage of the monarchy as a separate institution, he argues, is that not being subject to the risks of election the King can take strong action. Moreover, he points out, while the Government can take all credit for good legislation, they can use the King as their scapegoat when anything goes wrong. The cabinet remaining adamant in their demand, the King threatens to abdicate in favour of his son, dissolve parliament and fight election as a commoner. This upsets the Cabinet's apple cart and the Prime Minister tears up the ultimatum.

Apart from the theme of monarchy vs. democracy the interest of the play derives from the light it throws on Shaw's sensitiveness to beauty—beauty of Nature as well as of woman. This may be seen in the conversation of the King's private secretaries and of his mistress Orinthia.

There is hardly any plot. Shaw makes up this deficiency by introducing two exciting incidents: the love play of the King and his mistress and the visit of the American Ambassador. Both of them are wholly irrelevant.

Galsworthy (1867-1933). Born in Surrey, John Galsworthy was educated at Harrow and Oxford. He practised law for a time but didn't like the profession. He travelled a good deal, took to literature and was successful both as novelist and as dramatist. It is probable that he will be remembered more by his plays, such as *The Silver Box* and *Strife* than by his *Forsyte Saga*.

Though an aristocrat by birth, Galsworthy had a social conscience and fully realized his responsibility to society. Full of the milk of human kindness, he would not be content with isolated acts of charity. He wanted to delve deep into the roots of human nature and into the causes of social cruelty and injustice. Though he became a crusader against social evils, and wrote thesis or problem plays, he was never a propagandist. His social conscience was balanced by his artistic conscience. This would not permit him to exaggerate or falsify anything in his plays for the purpose of enforcing his meaning or message. There is no loud or direct preaching, no elaborate argument, no thunderous denunciation in his plays. He had a perfect sense of form and kept his advocacy strictly within the limits of art. The moral of a Galsworthy play is held in solution and is never obtruded. When occasionally it is given through a character's speech, the character chosen is some one insignificant, as for example, Frost, Anthony's valet (*Strife*).

According to Galsworthy the cruelties and sufferings of humanity are caused by egoism, folly and lack of imagination or the ability to place oneself in the position of others. As Falder says after his release from prison, "Nobody wishes you harm, but they down you all the same." Average human beings are decent, but they are blinded by passion and prejudice—result of self-absorption. Most of the tyran-

nies and wrongs in the world are due to a general incapacity to enter fully into the needs and circumstances of others. It is lack of sympathetic understanding. "If I had one prayer to make," says Ferrand in *The Pigeon*, "it would be, Good God, give me to understand." To promote this understanding is accordingly the chief aim of Galsworthy as a dramatist. He does not paint his characters in absolutes, in terms of black and white, as heroes or villains. In the various conflicts depicted in his plays, there is good and bad on both sides. Even when Galsworthy's sympathies are obvious, he is scrupulously fair and impartial in presenting the other side. In *The Silver Box*, for example, it would have been easy to make the Barthwicks heartless villains and Jones their innocent victim. But the aristocrats, however self-regarding, are not bad men. Jones similarly is not all innocence; he is a wife-beater and had pocketed the silver box out of 'spite' against the rich. The real villain is neither Jack Barthwick nor Jones, but the legal system for which we are all responsible. It crushes the weak, whether the weakness be the weakness of poverty, as in the case of the Joneses, or of character as in the case of Falder (*Justice*). Established to defend society from the criminal, the law courts sometimes become soul-less instruments of monstrous injustice through mechanical and unimaginative application of the law. It is this kind of irony that pervades all Galsworthy's plays.

Fair and impartial though Galsworthy is in his attitude to the parties in conflict, he is not unfeeling. Impassive and aloof as he appears in holding the balance even, under the surface he quivers with emotion. His impassivity, his imperturbability, is merely a mask to hide his pity and indignation. He is full of compassion for the underdog, for the victim of cruelty and wrong. The revelations that he makes are designed to arouse not only thought but also emotion.

Unlike Shaw he does not prescribe any pet scheme of reform. He employs all his art to rouse in his audience serious thought and deep feeling—feeling that will lead to reform.

Subtle as an artist, Galsworthy is also a master of dramatic craftsmanship. His theory of drama is explicitly stated in 'Some Platitudes concerning Drama' in *The Inn of Tranquillity*. "A good plot," he says, "is that sure edifice which slowly rises out of the interplay of circumstance on temperament, and temperament on circumstance, within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea. A human being is the best plot there is." Galsworthy does not weave intricate plots. According to him, characters and situations should be so grouped "as to have a spire of meaning." In other words, a play should be built up round an idea or theme. As regards characterisation, Galsworthy is an Aristotlean and subordinates character to plot. He has created few memorable characters. In this he is different from Shakespeare whose characters exist in their own right, quite independent of the plays in which they appear. Galsworthy does not elaborate his characters beyond what is necessary for their function in the play. His view of dramatic dialogue is that it should be severely economical rejecting all jokes and epigrams unrelated to character. Galsworthy's dialogue

is in marked contrast to Shaw's paradoxes, witticisms and verbal fireworks. Indeed, compared with the voluble characters of Shaw, Galsworthy's are almost dumb. They often speak volumes in one meaningful look, gesture or ejaculation. Mrs. Jones's "Oh Sir!" to Barthwick senior is more eloquent than any fine moving speech would have been.

In plot, character, action, dialogue and other details of dramatic technique Galsworthy displays astonishing economy and restraint. He is more effective by his reserve than Shaw by his excess.

As a sociological dramatist Galsworthy has affinities with Ibsen and Shaw, but he does not duplicate either of them. He has the same burning social zeal as they, but he achieves his effects by subtler methods and by a more convincing realism. Above all, he is most impressive in his consistency. No plays in English are more homogeneous than Galsworthy's. Few of his characters are memorable, but many of his plays are. And they are so because the same undercurrent of irony runs through all of them and they are animated by the same spirit of idealism and by the same appeal for imaginative sympathy.

Various criticisms of Galsworthy as a dramatist have been voiced and these may now be briefly examined. One is that his characters are types; another that the suffering characters in his plays are pathetic rather than tragic; still another that he is sentimental. The answer to the first criticism is that there is no individual character who is not also a type. The characters of Dickens are types as well as individuals. Besides, as has been said before, Galsworthy was not interested in characters for their own sake apart from their function in the plot. The truth of the second criticism must be admitted, but the critics should be reminded that Galsworthy's tragedies are social tragedies, not Greek or Shakespearean. In the latter the hero, a person of high rank, so contends with fate that even when defeated in the unequal struggle he is "bloody but unbowed" and wins our awed sympathy. In Galsworthy's social tragedies there are no heroes, only victims. The sufferer, usually a person of humble rank fights against social forces and is beaten. The struggle here too is unequal, but in so far as the forces ranged against him are social and not supernatural, he appears a pathetic figure rather than tragic. He excites our pity but not awe.

Galsworthy's own claim is that not all his "puppets are beaten in their struggle with society." He claims exemption for Anthony, Roberts, Freeda, Strangway, Stephen More and a few others who, he says, "come out of the fray with their heads bloody, but unbowed."

As regards the charge of sentiment, it is enough to say that, as it is, there is so little sentiment left in the modern world that we should be thankful for it wherever found. There is nothing cheap or false about Galsworthy's sentiment. His artistic sincerity is above question.

The one really serious criticism that can be levelled against Galsworthy is that his plays are too sombre. There is little joy or humour in them. With the exception of Miss Orme's remark (in

Loyalties) that she couldn't possibly "jump more than six inches in these skirts" and some moments of humour in *The Pigeon* there is little in the plays to relieve tragic tension.

This is the price one has to pay for excessive gravity. A little levity would have vastly improved the plays. As Chesterton somewhere says, "Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly." To see life steadily and see it whole is to see light as well as darkness.

The four plays summarised below represent the best of Galsworthy's drama. His range of interest is wide, extending as it does from domestic relationships to international fellowship. Of the other notable plays *The Eldest Son*, *The Skin Game* and *Loyalties* deal with caste or class prejudice; *The Mob* is a tragedy of idealism; and *The Little Man* an interesting document on international brotherhood.

The Silver Box. Jack Barthwick, young son of an aristocratic M.P., totters home drunk after midnight. Jim Jones, 30, a drunken out-of-work loafer who happens to be passing assists him to open the door of his dining room. Jack has stolen a lady's purse to score her off, and Jones who has been invited in pockets Jack's silver cigarette-box to score him off. When next morning the box is found missing, suspicion falls on Mrs. Jones who is charwoman in the Barthwick home. The police inspector Snow is about to take Mrs. Jones into custody when Jones owns to the theft and assaults the inspector for presuming to lay hands on his innocent wife. Trial in a magistrate's court follows. Old Barthwick anxious to avoid scandal employs a solicitor to protect his son. During the trial the Joneses are revealed to be very poor, and the Barthwicks ask the magistrate to drop the charge of theft and proceed with the case as one of assault only. By adroit manoeuvring Jack's theft of the purse is passed over and Jones is convicted and sentenced to one month's hard labour. The play shows how the power of wealth can tilt the scales of justice. The irony is driven home by Jones's remarks to the magistrate after the sentence: "Call this justice? What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse—'e took the purse but it's 'is money got 'im off. Justice!"

As Barthwick senior follows his swaggering son out of the court, Mrs. Jones turns to him with a humble gesture and says, "Oh! Sir!"—Barthwick turns tail and hurries out.

Strife. A strike has been on in the Trenartha Tin Plate Works on English-Welsh border throughout the winter, entailing great suffering among the workers. The directors have come down from London to meet the strikers. John Anthony, 76, is Chairman of the Board of Directors, and David Roberts is the leader of the strikers. At the meeting Anthony and Roberts are both adamant and the meeting is adjourned till 5 in the afternoon. In the meantime, Mrs. Roberts who has been ailing and suffering from malnutrition dies. At the afternoon meeting the directors overrule Anthony and Roberts is repudiated by the strikers. A compromise is reached on the same terms as those which were offered six months before. The irony is well expressed by Harness, the Union leader who says, "That's where the fun comes in."

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and "prosecuted for trying to be where every one wishes her." Wellwyn is distressed at her being dragged to the police station, but Ferrand consoles him by saying: "Do not grieve, Monsieur! This will give her courage. There is nothing that gives more courage than to see the irony of things."

Ann at last takes a decisive step and forces Wellwyn to move to another lodging where he would be free of these pests. But he is as incorrigible in his generosity as his beneficiaries are in their pet vices. In the closing scene he is seen tipping the furniture removers ("humble men") thrice over and giving his old birds his new address. He remains the pigeon to be plucked.

The play demonstrates the futility of all reform based on theory or abstract principles. Reformers "lose sight of the individual." The three vagabonds are typical of free and easy-going wastrels who like to go their own way untrammelled by the disciplines of a reformatory. As Ferrand, their spokesman, says they would not let reformers "make us prisoners, with their theories." Reformers lack understanding. The vagabonds like Wellwyn because he has a kind, understanding heart. "I saw well from the first," says Ferrand to Wellwyn, "that you are no Christian. You have so kind a face." "You understand. When we are with you we feel something—here (He touches his heart). If I had one prayer to make, it would be, Good God, give me to understand!"

Wellwyn, however, is not intended as the ideal of philanthropy. He lacks firmness and judgment, qualities possessed by his daughter Ann. His generosity is no more successful than the theories of the reformers. His sole function in the play is that of contrast. He represents the spirit of genuine Christianity as against the conventional Christianity of the reformers.

Sir James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937) born in the small Scottish town of Kirriemuir ("Thrums"), was educated at the Edinburgh university and came to literature by way of journalism. Both as novelist and dramatist Barrie was a dreamer of dreams; his work is a blend of the highly improbable with the most minute realism. In fiction he belongs to the sentimental tradition and heads what has been called the Kailyard School, its other members being S.R. Crockett and Ian Maclaren." (Kailyard means a cabbage patch usually attached to a cottage). The Kailyard school of fiction is best represented by such sentimental pictures of idealised Scottish rustic life as *Old Licht Idylls* (1888), *Window in Thrums* (1889), *The Little Minister* (1891), and *Margaret Ogilvie* (1896). The twin threads of humour and sentiment run through all these sketches—the most popular, as also the longest, being *The Little Minister*. It is a romantic story of a young clergyman who falls in love with a charming and mischievous gipsy lass. It became a best-seller and was turned into a play in 1897. In *Margaret Ogilvie*, Barrie gave a biography of his mother. Barrie's other worth-reading stories are: *My Lady Nicotine* (1890), *Sentimental Tommy* (1896) and *Tommy and Grizel* (1900)

The same combination of romantic day-dream and naturalistic manner characterises Barrie drama. He had a sense of character as well a sense of the theatre—the two qualities without which no play can succeed on the stage. In addition he had the native gifts of humour, pathos, irony, and above all, a singular touch of delicacy—a shyness or reserve which in a large measure accounts for the charm of his plays.

As a dramatist, Barrie is outside the main line of realistic drama of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy. The themes of most of his plays are fantasies, but his skilful treatment of them made him as successful on the commercial stage as the others were on the Independent. *Peter Pan*, a pure fairy play, has had a regular season every year since it was first produced in 1904.

Dear Brutus (1920), another pure fantasy is also most likely to endure. Because of present day dislike of sentiment, Barrie is not in high favour, but audiences in the 1890s and the early years of the present century were still unashamedly sentimental, and enthusiastically welcomed such plays as *The Professor's Love Story* (1894), *The Little Minister* (1897), *Alice-Sit-by-the Fire* (1905), *A Kiss for Cinderella* (1916), and *Mary Rose* (1920).

In 1902, Barrie surprised his public by producing a play dealing with a basic problem, that of class barriers in British society. The play was *The Admirable Crichton*. In its own kind it is a masterpiece. It presents in a critical spirit the weakness of the English social hierarchy, but suggests no remedy. It is criticism, but neither thesis nor propaganda. The only other full-length play which treats a social problem is *What Every Woman Knows* (1908). There are, however, several one-act plays which are frankly realistic; such as, *The Twelve Pound Look* (1910), *Rosalind* (1912), *The Will* (1913), *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals* (1917), and *Shall We Join the Ladies?* (1921). A definitive (revised) edition of Barrie's collected plays was published in 1942.

The Admirable Crichton (1902). The Earl of Loam professes belief in the principle of equality of all men, and every month gives a tea party at which he and his guests mingle freely with the servants. His butler Crichton is conservative and respectfully demurs, being convinced that in civilized society class distinctions are natural. He cannot regard himself as the equal of Lord Loam, for in that case the coachman, the gardener and other servants would claim equality with him (Crichton). The class gradations in the upper classes have their counterparts in the lower orders. Besides Loam, the aristocratic group includes his three daughters Catherine, Agatha and the imperious Mary; Lord Brocklehurst, a silly youngster to whom Mary is engaged; Loam's nephew Ernest Woolley, a conceited maker of cheap epigrams; and Treherne, a young clergyman.

Lord Loam decides on a yachting trip, the party including the three daughters, Ernest, Treherne and two servants—Crichton and Tweeny, the kitchen-maid. The party has been out two months

when they are shipwrecked on a desert island in the Pacific. The class distinctions of London society are found inadequate to the new situation and the roles of master and servant are reversed. Crichton with his natural ability and strength assumes command. He builds a house with amenities including electricity. He places beacons on the island which can be illuminated by pulling a central switch in case a ship is sighted. Everybody has to work, for Crichton's orders are "no work, no dinner". Crichton, Tweeny, and Treherne cook meals; Lord Loam does such odd jobs as collecting firewood and carrying water. The conceited Ernest is cut to size by being ducked in a bucket for his epigrams. As a further humiliation, when he proposes marriage to Tweeny he is turned down as not good enough. Tweeny herself is jilted by Crichton. Flying higher, he proposes to Mary and is promptly accepted. He is the 'Governor' now and calls Loam 'daddy'. Loam expresses his gratitude to Crichton for conferring such an honour on his family.

After two years comes the most dramatic moment of the play. The party is celebrating the betrothal of Mary and Crichton with song and dance when a canon shot is heard and a ship sighted. They are not anxious to be rescued, being so happy and contented. Mary implores Crichton not to signal the ship. But Crichton is determined to "play the game", though he is the one to lose most. He pulls the switch, lighting up all the beacons. The sailors arrive and the party is rescued.

Back in London the old order is restored. Loam is again "Your Lordship" and Crichton the bowing butler. Mary picks up her engagement to Brocklehurst, though not without a pang for the lost enchantment of the island. When she tells Crichton that there must be something wrong with England where she cannot be herself, he respectfully protests that he won't listen to any disparaging remarks about England.

Peter Pan (1904). No summary can reproduce the charm of the fairy story unfolded in the play. In bare outlines the story is as follows.

John, Wendy and Michael, the three small children of Mr. and Mrs. Darling have been put to bed by their nurse Nana—a huge Newfoundland dog—and the parents after bidding them good night go out to a dinner party. Peter Pan flies in through the nursery window, and guided by a ball of light which plays about drawers and wardrobe searches for his shadow which had come off while he hurriedly escaped through the window at the approach of Nana. He has returned now that Nana is chained downstairs. He has found the shadow and as he is trying to stick it on with soap, Wendy awakens. He tells her he has no mother but when Wendy tries to kiss him, he holds back saying no one should ever touch him. In lieu of a kiss Wendy gives him her thimble and Peter in exchange presents her with an acorn button from his dress, which is mostly leaves and cobwebs. Then he tells her his story.

He had run away the day he was born after hearing father and mother talk about what he would become when grown up. He wanted to remain always a boy and have fun. So he went to live with fairies in the Never-Never Land. Fairies, he explains, are the laughter of new babies, and a fairy dies the moment a child says he doesn't believe in fairies. The ball of light is Tinker Bell, a 'common' fairy who mends pots and pans of the fairies. She is jealous of Wendy, calls her "silly ass" and pulls her hair. He has come to the nursery to hear stories which he would tell the six Lost Boys—children who fall off their prams. Wendy boasts she knows many stories and is persuaded to come to the Never-Never Land and be a mother to the boys. Peter sprinkles a magic dust on the children and off they fly.

When they approach the abode of the boys, they at the instigation of the jealous Tinker try to shoot down Wendy with bow and arrow. The arrow hits the acorn button and Wendy escapes unhurt. A house is soon built for Wendy, complete with a chimney—which is John's stovepipe hat. Wendy gathers together all the boys and tells them stories. Peter guards the door while glowing fairies hover around in the darkness of the forest.

The Darling children and the Lost Boys have a series of exciting adventures. They try to capture mermaids in the nearby lagoon, fight with the pirates and are captured by them. They are about to walk the plank (i.e. to be drowned) when Peter arrives and after a gallant battle defeats Hook, the pirate captain, and rescues the children. When Hook over-whelmed by Peter's bravery cries: 'Tis some fiend fighting me! Pan, who and what are thou? Peter answers: "I'm youth, I'm joy. I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg."

The Darling children are escorted back home, the six Lost Boys accompanying them. The Darlings are overjoyed to get back their dear ones and gladly adopt the six boys. They offer to adopt Peter too, but he refuses because of his loathing for school and manhood. So it is decided that Wendy shall visit him once a year to do his spring cleaning.

A year later Wendy visits Peter. After she has finished cleaning his house and is leaving for home she begs Peter to call for her again next year saying: If another girl—if one younger than I am—She breaks off. She wants to embrace him but he holds back. With a note of resignation in her voice she says, "Yes, I know" and flies off.

Pan is left pondering the meaning of "Yes, I know". After a while he dismisses the puzzle, takes out his pipes and begins to play. Birds and fairies cluster round him. "He plays on and on till we wake up."

Though this vision of Never-Never Land is full of day-dreams of children, it is not without its meaning for adults. Peter Pan symbolises youth and joy but he also symbolises the man who refuses to

give up his romantic illusions. Peter may play his rapturous pipes to keep off reality, but he feels his isolation and is forced to haunt nurseries to pick up not only his shadow but also playmates. He is a pathetic figure; so is the man who refuses to face the harsh realities of life. Day-dreams are fine as long as they last; but they pass like everything else.

The innocence and tender pathos of the last scene—that of parting between Peter and Wendy—conveyed so delicately in a few broken words shows the hand of a master-artist.

What Every Woman Knows (1908). John Shands, a railway porter improves himself by self-study until he becomes a member of Parliament. He is a self-important person without a sense of humour. He is not very fond of his wife Maggie, who is a plain-looking and charmless woman, but who is the real inspiration behind his fine speeches. He is shocked to discover that it is the little touches put in by Maggie that account for the effectiveness of his speeches. Men who reach the top think they have done it all by themselves; they forget the all-important contributions made by their devoted and more wide-awake wives. This is "what every woman knows."

The Twelve-Pound Look (1910). This is a one-act play which exposes the egoism of a complacent man of success. It recalls Ibsen's *Doll's House*. Harry Sims is going to be knighted. He is in high good humour after rehearsing the Knighthood ceremony with the future Lady Sims, but his day is spoiled by a typist who arrives in response to his advertisement. She is Kate, his first wife, who had deserted him fourteen years before. He insists on knowing who the man was for whom she had left him. She tells him there was no other man—that was just a fib designed to enable him to get his divorce. She reveals that she had got disgusted with his religion of success and his want of finer feelings. He had kept her in expensive luxury just for his prestige and to make other women envy his wife. So, she tells him, she bought a typewriting machine, learnt typing, got through friends some work and with her first earnings paid for the machine—twelve pounds. When Harry reminds her that he is worth a quarter of a million, she retorts that to her he is worth exactly twelve pounds, the cost of the typing machine.

Dear Brutus (1920). Like *Peter Pan* this too is a fantasia with a moral. A number of ladies and gents are guests at Lob's house (Lob is another name of Puck, the mischievous elf). The guests have one thing in common: they wish they could live their lives over again. They believe that if they got another chance they would order their lives more wisely. It is mid-summer eve when strange things can happen. The garden of Lob's house turns into a magic wood, and since it is moonlit night, the guests wander into it. For a time their dreams come true. Mr. Purdie who wished he had married Joana rather than Mabel (his present wife) finds himself married to Joana, but wishes he had wed Mabel. Will Dearth, the artist, gets the daughter of his dreams, but loses her in pursuit of a pretty woman.

(She would have been lost to him in any case after her marriage). The thieving butler Matey also gets his chance, but only to become a swindling financier.

Human nature does not change. As Purdie puts it: "I feel there is something in me that will make me go on being the same ass however many chances I get." And he quotes Shakespeare in support—

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Somerset Maugham

Analysis of Maugham's plays follows.

The Sacred Flame. Maurice Tabret, a permanent invalid, crippled, "all smashed up" in a plane accident in the war, is looked after by Nurse Wayland, while the young and beautiful Stella, his wife, is kept away because Maurice is so devoted to her that he does not like she should have anything to do with the disgusting details of his illness. Colin, his brother, comes home for a holiday from America and the inevitable happens. Stella is going to have a baby by him. (Maurice is incapable of having marital relations with his wife.) Mrs. Morris, the mother, seeing that disclosure will break Maurice's heart, puts an end to his unendurable pain by giving him, as promised, an overdose of sleeping pills. She is shown as a very understanding and wise lady who makes due allowance for Stella's weakness. Chastity, she says, is not the whole of virtue. There are other constituents: kindness, courage, consideration for others, commonsense and humour.

Miss Wayland, who was determined to make trouble by insisting on an inquest, is so touched by the old lady's goodness that she decides to swear, if necessary, that it was she who left the sleeping pills by Maurice's bedside.

Sheppey. Sheppey, a hairdresser's assistant, wins over eight thousand pounds in the Irish Sweep and decides to give away all the money to charity. His family, who have made grand plans, are flabbergasted and think he is crazy. Specialists are consulted and they agree. Dr. Jervis says no sane man gives away all his money to the poor. "A sane man takes money from the poor." Dr. Ennis-more regards all philanthropy as the direct result of repressed homosexuality. With proper education of the young, he says, all philanthropy could be stamped out of the country. They are about to shut Sheppey up in a lunatic asylum when suddenly he is found dead in his chair.

Maugham called this play a sardonic comedy. The last scene is not very pleasing. It's too bad, Sheppey popped off just when he was "going to do a bit of good in the world."

Samuel Beckett (1906—)

Waiting for Godot (1955). At the foot of a leafless tree by the side

of a lonely road two wretched old tramps Vladimir and Estragon wait for a mysterious Godot. They are whiling away their time discussing salvation and in buffoonery when a farcical diversion is provided by the appearance of Pozzo, a bullying master, and Lucky, his submissive slave. Lucky is loaded with luggage and carries in his mouth a whip with which he is lashed by Pozzo who drives him as if he were a beast of burden. Lucky obeys all the insolent commands of Pozzo. He sings and dances for him, even thinks for him! When asked to think, Lucky throws down his burden and breaks out into a long nonsensical oration which is nothing but a string of learned but meaningless philosophical and scientific clichés. This is a satire on the prostitution of language by politicians and salesmen. The speech over, Lucky picks up his load and the pair leave. A boy brings a message that Godot cannot come but will come the next evening. Disappointed, the tramps discuss whether or not to hang themselves on the tree but decide to wait.

The second Act opens next day at the same place; the only change is that a few leaves have sprouted on the tree. The tramps are clowning when the farcical pair enter, but now Pozzo is blind and Lucky deaf. Pozzo falls down. The tramps help him to his feet. As Vladimir says: "They (Pozzo and Lucky) represent all mankind. Let us represent worthily for once the fool brood to which a cruel fate consigned us."

The tramps are still waiting for Godot when the play ends. Vladimir says: "Godot will come and we will be saved. If we drop him He will punish us."

An Absurdist play explores the cause or causes of human suffering. In this play there is the actual physical suffering of Lucky which is caused by man's cruelty to man. A more potent cause of suffering is man's uncertainty about his origin and destination. This is symbolised by the tramps' mystification over the identity of Mr. Godot, who, of course, is no other than God. That the play has religious significance is made clear right in the beginning. The tramps know their Bible and are troubled over their salvation. One of the thieves was saved. The other was damned. They are poised between the hope of salvation and the fear of damnation.

The tree is also symbolic. When depressed, the tramps think of hanging themselves on the bare, leafless tree which to them is a gallows. But it is also the tree of life, for the next day it sprouts a few leaves. At the end of the play they are still waiting—a tribute to man's endurance.

The above interpretation of the play may strike some readers as an over-simplification. The symbolism of the play is certainly too complex to admit of a single or simple interpretation. When asked about the meaning of the play, Beckett quoted a sentence in St. Augustine. "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned." He did not elaborate. Everyone can read in the play his own message. There is little doubt,

however, that the play has strong contemporary appeal in that it reflects the general mood of doubt of the post-war period, especially in Europe, whether it is possible for man to accept God and his grace in a meaningless universe.

Waiting for Godot is a prose play with poetic overtones. Quite apart from the visual imagery, the poetic quality is inherent in the language: "The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of laugh."

Few Expressionist plays are great, but *Waiting for Godot* is an exception. The simplicity of its design, its severe structural economy (character and incident cut down to minimum), its poetic quality and the element of universality combine to raise it far above the level of the run-of-the-mill plays of today. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to say that it is the most important play in contemporary drama of the last two decades.

John Osborne

Look Back in Anger (1956). No play of the Naturalist (or Neo-Realist) school has attracted more attention than John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. It may be granted at once that the author has both literary talent and theatrical skill. Produced in 1956, it was something of a sensation. Its theme of misalliance, its shabby setting in a garret—a novelty at the time, its vehement denunciation of the upper classes, and its sex interest—all contributed to its immediate and immense success. Judged at this distance of time it is not a great play; it is sheer propaganda.

Jimmy Porter, an educated youth of the working class feels frustrated because he is unable to get a job suited to his talents. He takes it out on his wife Alison, daughter of a Colonel, by a relentless attack of savage abuse against her and her privileged class. When she goes to her parents because she is pregnant, her place is taken by her friend Helena who becomes Jimmy's mistress. Alison's baby dies and she returns, but it is only when he has broken her spirit and reduced her to abject humiliation that they renew their relationship of man and wife.

The play is unsatisfactory in many respects. Its greatest weakness is the unconvincing character of Jimmy. He is a neurotic unhinged by self-pity and his hysterical and senseless attack on the upper classes has no adequate motivation. That his father had died after protracted illness and that his mother had nursed him indifferently can hardly be blamed on the aristocracy. If he is supposed to represent the Angry Youngmen of the present generation out to denounce the 'establishment' Jimmy should have been cast in the role of a labour leader.

The circumstances of Jimmy's marriage are left vague. Was his motive rape on the upper classes? The thing is too shocking to

contemplate, but maybe the audience looked upon it in that light and found it exciting. Another questionable thing is the role of Helena. Considering her earlier reactions to Jimmy, it is highly improbable that she would become his mistress.

There is no real dialogue in the play. In its place we have a series of monologues in which Jimmy demonstrates his mastery of vituperative rhetoric. The other characters are non-entities—passive listeners or targets. They make no retort or repartee. What could be sillier than Jimmy's wisecrack that "there aren't any good, brave causes left?" And yet it is allowed to pass. It is difficult to escape the impression that he is the mouthpiece of the author.

As a satire on the upper classes the play is a total failure. Satire to be effective must be an expression of righteous indignation provoked by some social or moral abuse. Jimmy's anger is due to personal envy of the great.

Osborne's other and more recent plays are: *The World of Paul Slickey*, *The Entertainer*, *Luther*, *Two Plays for England*, *Inadmissible Evidence*, *A Patriot for Me*, *A Bond Honoured*.

They follow the same basic pattern. The author lacks maturity of thought and detachment so essential in a dramatist.

CHAPTER 49

POETIC DRAMA

Yeats—Eliot—Fry—Auden.

Poetic drama or drama in verse has not been popular in the 20th century. The story of the Professor of Poetry who ended up as a Professor of Economics after discovering that all his life he had been talking prose well illustrates the modern attitude. The 20th century, like the 18th, will go down in history as an age of prose. The tradition of verse as the natural vehicle of dramatic expression died with Shakespeare and his contemporaries. After them the normal medium of expression in plays has been prose. We are living in a scientific and prosaic age, and it is not surprising that plays dealing with contemporary life of ordinary men and women should be written in prose. Lofty themes—historical, mythical, religious—belong to another world where poetry is the natural language. Though the fashion has not caught on, several attempts at verse drama have been made and no literary history can ignore them.

Apart from Lascelles Abercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, Stephen Phillips and Masefield who wrote poetic plays in the earlier years of this century, the most notable contributors to poetic drama have been Yeats, Eliot, Auden and Fry. Synge and O'Casey, though writers of prose plays, have been included in this chapter, for they together with Yeats form the Irish group and could not conveniently be accommodated elsewhere.

Yeats. As a dramatist pure and simple, Yeats has lesser force than Synge, but as a poetic playwright he occupies the foremost position in the Irish theatre. The combination of romanticism and realism that informs his poetry also characterises his plays. This combination is rather unstable, for romantic imagination tends to take precedence over realism. Yeats was a mystic dreamer, and the plays have a dream-like quality. The characters, though charming, are shadowy. His world is that of mystery and magic, and he is happier with fairies and demons, angels and monsters. The verse plays include *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Land of Heart's Desire*, *Deirdre*, *The Hourglass*, *The Green Helmet*, *A Full Moon in March*.

Of his prose plays the best are *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and *The Pot of Broth*.

The Countess Cathleen, undoubtedly Yeats's best play, was written to honour his beloved Maud Gonne. The Countess saves her people from dying when her land is ravaged by famine by selling her soul to the devil. The theme is that of Faustus, with this difference that instead of going to hell she goes to heaven, for God considers only motive and not the deed. Throughout, Yeats's love for Maud Gonne is very thinly disguised. He is Aileel in the play—the poet and singer.

Cathleen ni Houlihan. Cathleen is a poor old woman for whom hundreds of men have died, though she never set out for any of them. She visits a house in which a wedding is to take place. The eldest son of the house Michael who is going to marry Delia, is so attracted to the poor old woman that he runs after her, leaving his fiancée weeping. The younger brother Patrick sees not the poor old woman but a girl going down the road. The French have landed and all including Michael join them.

The old woman demands total sacrifice for the land. She is symbolic for Maud Gonne who rallied the Irish for freedom fight.

Deirdre. The story of Deirdre occupies in Irish literature much the same place as that of King Arthur in English. Yeats's play deals only with the last part of the story. Deirdre and Naoise are lured back to his land by King Conchubar. While they are in the guest house, Deirdre has misgivings about the King's promised pardon. She warns Naoise, but he puts his trust in the King's word. To show a brave front they play chess. Conchubar has Naoise executed and Deirdre kills herself with a knife she had seized from one of the women musicians. Fergus, a friend of the King's, enters too late with his followers with sickles and scythes. A very moving and powerful play.

The Hourglass. A Wise Man keeps school and teaches there is no God, no soul, no Heaven, no Hell. Teigue, the fool, sees an angel. The Wise Man sees it too. The angel tells the Wise man he has but one hour to live, and he can be saved if he can find but one man who has faith, who has not been corrupted by his teachings. The Wise Man asks his pupils, his wife, his children, but they simply repeat his teachings. It is Teigue, the fool, who knows but won't speak. Almost when the last pinch of sand in the hourglass remains to run out the Wise Man sees the Truth like a flash of lightning.

God's will prevails. Even blades of grass know the Truth and would utter it if they had tongues. He prays: God's will be done even if it means his own damnation. He dies. An angel comes with a golden casket. A white butterfly (the dead man's soul) pops out of his mouth. The fool catches it. The angel opens the casket and the fool puts it in. The casket will be opened in the garden of Paradise.

The Green Helmet. This is a heroic farce in glorification of the virtue of courage as exemplified in the mythical hero, Cuchulain. While Cuchulain is away in foreign parts, a red-cloaked monster of

a man with a green helmet appears and challenges the Irish Knights to a fight. Connally whips off the tall man's head, but the headless monster plunges back into the sea. Cuchulain returns home. The three kings and their queens boast of their greatness. The kings boast of their strength and the queens claim precedence on the ground of their husbands' superiority over their rivals, viz. Cuchulain and his wife Emer. In the midst of this dispute bursts the red-cloaked man. The kings now fight as to who shall take the green helmet. The monster demands a head for the head that he had given. Only Cuchulain is prepared to give his head, though he was not present at the fight in which the red-cloaked man had lost his head. Pleased by this chivalrous gesture the tall man reveals that he is the Rector of the land who periodically plays this joke just to choose the champion of the land who has the following qualities: (a) nothing prevents him from laughing. (b) he is never bitter even if betrayed by all, and (c) he is prepared to scatter life like a gambler.

A Full Moon in March (1935). The idea of the play is that a woman may be as beautiful as the moon and yet lack something, viz. "desecration and the lover's night."

In other words, her beauty is fulfilled only in union with her lover.

Considering the date of this play—1935—it is astonishing how young in spirit Yeats remained till the end. Much as the moralist may deplore the sentiment, such unhesitating declaration by a great poet cannot but evoke his admiration.

John M. Synge (1871—1909)

The Playboy of the Western World. To a little country pub on the coast of Mayo in Ireland comes a shy, frightened lad Christy Mahon with a tale that he is fleeing the police, for he has killed his father on a distant farm with a single blow of a loy (spade), splitting him to the navel. The publican and his pretty daughter Pegeen make much of such a hero and make him their pot boy. The girls of the village fall all over him with all kinds of delicacies, each desiring the hero for herself, the most determined being the widow Quin, thirty. Pegeen scornfully dismisses her betrothed Shawn deciding, without further ado, to marry Christy. Next morning, however, arrives old Mahon, Christy's father with his bandaged head. He had been only slightly hurt. He gives Christy a good thrashing and marches him off back home, to the great disappointment of Pegeen who has lost 'the only Playboy of the Western World'.

The Play is very exciting in the beginning, but the effect of the dramatic contrast is considerably diluted when Christy is shown as champion of the village games in which he has won all the prizes.

Riders to the Sea. Considered the greatest one-act play in English, *Riders to the Sea* is remarkable for its tragic intensity and homely pathos. Maurya, an old woman, lives with her son Bartley and two daughters Cathleen and Nora in a cottage on an island off the west

coast of Ireland. Bartley is determined to go to a horses' fair across the sea, despite his mother's protests. All her menfolk except Bartley have been swallowed by the sea and she has a misgiving that he too will never return. Bartley is riding his mare (followed by the grey pony) to catch the boat. The grey pony knocked him over into the sea and his body is washed ashore.

Maurya's lamentation is marked by stoic resignation as well as tender pathos which is very touching—

They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . They're all together this time, and the end is come. . . . Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

Sean O'Casey (1880 —)

Juno and the Paycock. The play begins as a comedy but suddenly turns into a tragedy. The period of the play is that of the Irish Civil War (1922). The Boyle family live in a two-roomed flat of a tenement house in Dublin. Jack Boyle (who styles himself 'Captain' on the strength of a single voyage to Liverpool in an old collier) calls his wife Juno because she was born in June, met her husband in June, married and had her son in June. Jack dodges work, getting ache in his legs whenever work is mentioned. He cadges money for his drinks from his wife and for the most part struts about the streets 'lie a pay-cock' in the company of a crony, Joxer, another loafer. Mary, twenty-two, is on strike; Johnny, the son, has been crippled in the civil war and is subject to fits of nervous fear. Juno is thus the only bread-winner of the family at the moment.

Jerry Devine, a young labour leader and Mary's sweetheart proposes marriage, but is dismissed in favour of Charlie Bentham, a young lawyer, who brings great news for the family. A relative has died and left his property to be divided between his 'first and second cousins'. Boyle is a first cousin and the share of the fortune coming to him may be anything between £1,500 and £2,000.

Boyle makes huge borrowings against the expected lagacy and makes extensive improvements in his style of living—new furniture, pictures, vases, etc. and a gramophone on the instalment plan.

Two months pass but there is no news from Benham who has left for England. Mary is expecting a baby by him and things are getting dark for the Boyles. Nugent, the tailor, learning that Boyle is not getting a penny under the will, takes away the suit he had supplied; Mrs. Madigan, a neighbour, carries away the gramophone in repayment of her loan of three pounds. The furniture, too, is taken away. It turns out that the will was defectively made; Bentham had not specified names, and now an army of cousins, first or second, has appeared, some from America and Australia, claiming equal shares.

On top of all this, Johnny is arrested and shot for having betrayed

a comrade Tancred. Juno and Mary, their cup of misery full to the brim, go to live with Juno's sister, leaving Boyle to shift for himself. He returns to the empty flat with Joxer—both drunk. Taking out from his pocket the only coin he has—a sixpence—and throwing it down on the floor, he says, "Wan single solithary tanner left out of all I borreyed. . . . The last o' the Mohicans. . . . The blinds is down, Joxer, the blinds is down! . . . I'm telling you, Joxer . . . th' whole world's. . . in a terr . . . ible state o' . . . chassis!"

The Plough and the Stars. The central theme is a domestic tragedy depicted against the background of the Easter Rebellion of 1916. 'The Plough and the Stars' was the flag of the Irish Citizen Army. Clitheroe (a bricklayer), Commandant of the Citizen Army, responds to the call of his superiors and goes out to join the fighting rebels in spite of the protests of his wife Nora. He is killed and Nora hysterical with grief creates a scene which, though natural and realistic, must have struck the Irish as unbecoming and unpatriotic. The play evoked violent opposition and there was a free fight in the Abbey Theatre when it was staged.

As in *Juno and the Paycock* the earlier part of the play is farcical comedy. The war hysteria of the time trickles to us at interval in such bits of speeches at a public meeting as the following—

Bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation that regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood . . . There are many things more horrible than bloodshed, and slavery is one of them.

T.S. Eliot

Eliot's claims about his plays are modest. He frankly admits they are experimental. The general theme is atonement of sin, the aim of his plays being a religious message. The pattern of his plays, though not obvious, is Greek drama. The medium is a special kind of fluent verse adapted to common speech—this common speech being that of the drawing room. Such a combination of aims and methods is incompatible and produces incongruous results. The most serious objection to the plays is that, like his poems, they are over-sophisticated. They are too literary. The richness and subtlety of literary allusiveness may be enjoyable in reading, it can only be disconcerting to an audience. The characters have varying degrees of individuality; if some of them are not sufficiently individualised, it is principally because they are used as instruments of religious or social purpose. Despite all this Eliot's contribution to poetic drama is massive.

Murder in the Cathedral (1935). Historical situation. (see *Political and Social Background*, Book Two, pp. 14—15).

Henry II was only 21 years old when he succeeded to the throne in 1154. He was attracted to Thomas Becket (b. 1118) who was in many respects a remarkable man—highly educated, clever, gay, brave. He became the King's favourite and was appointed Chancellor in

1155. He lived in great splendour and participated in all games, sports and other entertainments of the Court. In 1162, Henry appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket accepted the offer reluctantly, but insisted on resigning the Chancellorship on the ground that the two posts—one spiritual, the other secular—were incompatible. Immediately on becoming Archbishop, Becket astonished and annoyed the king and others by adopting the life-style of an ascetic. The second Knight in the play speaks no more than the truth in saying that “he became more priestly than the priests, he ostentatiously and offensively adopted an ascetic manner of life.”

During the previous reign law and order had been virtually in abeyance because of the Civil War, and the barons had perpetrated unspeakable atrocities on the people. The Church too had become very powerful. It had taken over criminal jurisdiction over the clergy. The utmost punishment the Church could inflict was to ‘unfrock’ the priest. In case of murder, this was no punishment at all. With a view to ending this anomaly and establishing a uniform legal system for the whole country and for all classes including the clergy, Henry drew up a Code called the “Constitutions of Clarendon” (Clarendon Castle near Salisbury) in 1164, and invited the Archbishop to sign his assent. Becket opposed and appealed to the Pope who later condemned the Code. This was a signal for open hostilities.

Henry then brought certain charges against Becket including a claim, said to be unjust, for an enormous sum of money. Fearing imprisonment, Becket escaped in disguise to Flanders. During the next six years, both parties intrigued in Europe Courts to gain support for their respective causes.

The King anxious to secure the throne for his eldest son, Henry, in his own lifetime, had him crowned (1170) by the Archbishop of York assisted by Bishops of London and Salisbury. Since crowning of the Kings of England was the privilege of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket claimed infringement of his right and suspended the Archbishop of York and excommunicated the Bishops. At his instance the Pope confirmed these sentences. When this news reached the King, he fell into a great rage and is reported to have said: “Have I no friend here who will rid me of this man” or words to that effect. Four barons (the four Knights of the play) took the hint and carried out what they took to be a command of their King.

Though a meeting between Henry and Becket had been arranged in France by the French King, it achieved nothing more than a sort of truce. Despite warnings and his own premonitions Becket returned to England and preached his Christmas Sermon in the Cathedral on the morning of 25 Dec. 1170. He was murdered on the fourth day after Christmas (29 Dec. 1170).

A Chorus and priests prepare us for the arrival of the Archbishop. Becket enters and in an oracular speech voices his dilemma; “They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer. They know and

do not know, that action is suffering. And suffering is action . . . Be forever still."

(Part I 208—17)

Stripped of paradox and obscure verbiage the dilemma is that of choice between life and death—"to act or suffer." If he decides for life, he is to *act* in order to regain his power, which means the sin of pride; if on the other hand, he decides to suffer to die, he will be falling into greater pride, greater sin, the pride of wearing the crown of martyrdom and being a saint in heaven. At this stage four Tempters appear one after another. The first three tempt him with wordly pleasure, power and glory, which he rejects. The fourth Tempter symbolises the Devil, who tempts Becket with his own egoistic desires for glory in heaven through martyrdom. To his question if he will by this means be "Supreme in this land," the Tempter replies: yes, "Supreme but for one", viz. the Devil.

Becket ponders this and by the time he comes to preach his sermon, the truth dawns on him. His real enemy is his little 'self'. As a Soofi mystic says, 'Nothing burns in hell but the self.' Conquest of self alone will make him supreme. He will desire nothing for himself, not even the glory of a saint. He will merge himself in the Supreme Self, his will in the Divine Will, so that his martyrdom will be the Will of God and not his own. And in His will is his peace.

Murder in the Cathedral is a religious play written for a religious occasion (The Canterbury Festival 1935) for a Christian audience. It is a literary or closet drama and is no more successful on the stage than others of the type produced by Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson and others.

The play is reported to be popular with religious people, presumably because of its religious trappings. But in spite of its paraphernalia of Chorus, Priests, Introits, TeDeuma, Sermons, ritual and the like, the play leaves one cold. The two attempts to screen it in connection with the Film Festival at Bombay and Delhi in the 50s ended in a fiasco. At both places it was hissed off the stage. The reason is not far to seek. The play lacks conviction, because the Becket of history was not such a saintly person as is sought to be made out by Eliot. The sources on which Eliot has drawn are the testimonies of monks and other supporters of Becket i.e. one-sided and partisan. The historical Becket is more correctly described by his assassins. Eliot evidently intended their speeches to be ironic or parodic, but unfortunately they are taken seriously by the audience or the readers as being more in accord with recorded history.

Apart from the doctrine of purified will or self-surrender expounded in Becket's sermon, the play evokes no religious feeling. Another specifically religious utterance of Becket's is that in which he emphasizes spiritual approach to secular problems. 'Those who put their faith in worldly order/Not controlled by the order of God',

etc., . . . (1378—91). This has no relation to the speaker's own conduct and character.

The play has several other defects. The element of deliberate bathos, the juxtaposition of the sublime and the ridiculous detracts seriously from the religious character of the play. "Several girls have disappeared unaccountably and some not able to" (I 180-81). "If you will remember me, my Lord, in your prayers/I'll remember you at kissing time below the stairs" (I 315-16). But the lengthy speech of the Chorus immediately before the murder enumerating their forebodings with nauseating details of putrid flesh, incense in the latrine, the sewer in the incense, etc. beats everything in this line. The verse of the play is not only prosaic: it is maked by pomposity and affection. To top all, the play, like his poems, suffers from Eliot's excessive allusiveness and obscurity. He is too learned to be simple. The only simple and sensible pieces in the play are Becket's sermon and the assassins' speeches—both in prose. It would have been far better if Eliot had written the play in prose; for his prose has, in a sense, greater intensity than his verse. It is precise and polished, even brilliant. As it is, the total impression is one of bewilderment. One is left wondering whether Becket was a martyr or "a monster of egoism", as one of the Knights calls him, "who committed suicide while of unsound mind"

In fairness to Eliot, however, it must be admitted that in regard to his subject he was prisoner of history, as Shakespeare had been before him in respect of *Macbeth*. Shakespeare with all his poetry did not quite succeed in making *Macbeth* (a murderer for a personal gain) a tragic hero (this with apologies to Prof Bradley). Eliot's success with Becket (a super-egoist) has been no better.

The Cocktail Party (1949). The comedy centres round the fortunes of Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlayne. Their problem is the usual conflict between husband and wife. Edward Chamberlayne's malady is his lack of decision. His passivity is imposed upon him by his wife whom he regards as "stronger than a battleship." The dominating Missus can live only on her own terms. Her contrariness is well illustrated by her answer to her husband when he complained that she wouldn't tell him where she wanted to go for their honeymoon: "How could I tell where I wanted to go unless you suggested some other place first?"

The problem is solved, through Julia, by the psychiatrist Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly. He makes them see themselves as they are—the lady unlovable and the gent unloving. The remedy is not separation or divorce, though both have provided grounds for this—the lady's affair with Peter and the gent's with Celia—but resignation to the human condition in which nothing is perfect. So they decide to keep the home fires burning and make the best of a bad job.

Celia atones for her sin by sacrificing herself in the service of some heathen natives in a far-off place called Kakinja. She comes

to realise that the world is a delusion. Eliot's Vedantic metaphysics is also echoed by Edward in his remarks on desire and the relationship between individual self (ego) and the supreme self. The individual self can flourish only when it submits to the higher, the divine partner.

The most amusing character in the play is the ever forgetful and meddlesome chatterbox, Julia. The dialogue is racy, polished, even brilliant. It is on an elevated plane—perhaps a shade too elevated for the drawing room. The play moves between two extremes of conversation: metaphysical, psychological and perplexing on one side and witty and amusing on the other.

Family Reunion. The family consists of Amy, dowager Lady Monchensey, her three sisters Ivy, Violet and Agatha; Mary, daughter of the dowager's deceased cousin; the lady's three sons Harry, John and Arthur, Harry's uncles (father's brothers) Col. Gerald Piper and Charles Piper.

The family is celebrating the dowager's birthday which is to be the occasion for family reunion. Harry arrives after an absence of eight or ten years in America. His brothers are absent due to accidents. Harry behaves erratically, being full of guilt for having murdered his wife, with whom life had become impossible. He had pushed her overboard during the voyage, but this was given out as an accident during a storm. Dr. Warburton, a friend of the family is called for consultation.

At a meeting with Agatha, Harry learns about his father who had died while Harry was still a child. The marriage made by his father had been very unhappy and he too had wanted to get rid of his wife, but was prevented from doing so by Agatha. She, the Principal of a Women's College, had during a vacation captured the love of Harry's father and there was an 'affair', which was known to the dowager. Agatha tells Harry that she had saved his mother from being killed because she wanted him as her own son, he being at the time in his mother's womb.

Harry is haunted by Eumenides (Furies of hell) and only he, Agatha and Mary see them in the embrasure of the window. Mary who had been a playmate of Harry's was intended by the dowager to be the second wife of Harry.

Harry egged on by Agatha decides to quit and become a missionary as an expiation for his crime. Amy holds Agatha responsible for his going and disappointing all her hopes: "You took my husband from me and now you take my son." Agatha justifies herself on the ground that she did not take the husband from her since he was never hers. She is, however, conscious of her sin. A curse has descended upon the house and it must be fulfilled. The dowager dies broken-hearted and the other two (Harry and Agatha) go their separate ways seeking redemption.

Agatha's rhetorical speeches are echoes of the enigmas, ambiguities and paradoxes of Eliot's poems. His favourite myth of spring

and new vegetation of *The Waste Land* also finds a place in Harry's speeches. One wonders if Agatha's dark rhetoric fits into a drawing room setting.

The Confidential Clerk (1953). This farcical play on the theme of parents seeking their lost children is probably derived from a comedy of Euripides, the *Ion*. The central interest is the mistaken identity of Colby Simpkins, a young man of 25 who at the opening of the play has taken over as the confidential clerk of Sir Claude Mulhamer, a London businessman, replacing Eggerson who has retired. Sir Claude believes Colby is his son from his first wife, while Elizabeth believes he is her missing child by a lover before her marriage. Eventually, Colby is found to be the son of Herbert Guzzard, an organist.

The point of the play is the contrast between an idealist and a realist. Sir Claude's secret passion was ceramics, but circumstances had forced him to become a financier. He had been successful in his business, for he had inherited business instincts from his father. He, however, knew he would only be an ordinary potter, and so accepted facts. Just the reverse is the case of Colby. Though Sir Claude would like him to remain as his son, Colby decides to sacrifice wealth and position for the sake of his passion for music, inherited from his father; he accepts the position of organist offered by Eggerson in his parish church.

To round off the story, Elizabeth's missing child is found to be Barnabas Kaghan, an employee of Sir Claude's. He marries Lucasta, the illegitimate daughter of Sir Claude.

The play suffers from Eliot's usual defect of over-sophistication. The audience couldn't all be so mighty intellectual as to appreciate the subtleties of the conversation between Sir Claude and Lady Elizabeth, both of whom value ideas and inspirations.

The Elder Statesman (1955). This play is a reversion to the theme of sin and redemption. Lord Claverton-Ferry who made a good-marriage has added his wife's family name because of its prestige. He has retired from politics at sixty and is director of a bank and chairman of companies. He is looked after by his devoted daughter Monica who accompanies him to Badgely Court, a country rest-cure hotel. He is afraid of loneliness and is at the same time afraid of strangers. Out at the Badgely court he has three problems to face. These are Gomez, an old friend of his Oxford days, Mrs. Carghill, an old flame, and his son Michael.

The first two blackmail him. Gomez knows one discreditable fact, viz. that Claverton did not stop after running over an old man while driving back to Oxford from a picnic with two girls. Mrs. Carghill is sore that Claverton had jilted her after an intense love affair and escaped consequences by heavy payment in a breach of promise suit which was settled out of court. She has still in her possession Claverton's love letters which would have been produced in court had there been a trial. They are worth a fortune—but the

blackmail is not for money, for both his tormentors are rich.

Gomez in Fred Culverwell who after serving a prison term for forgery had left England for Central America where he had settled at San Marco and amassed a fortune. Lord Claverton had taught him expensive tastes beyond his means with the result that he was sent down from Oxford and as a clerk was convicted of forgery. Both are unpleasant reminders of Claverton's guilty past and both threaten him with their company.

Michael who had a cushy job in a business firm on the strength of his name finds the job distasteful, incurs heavy debts, and is cashiered. He decides to go abroad and make his own way unhampered by his father's name and title.

Lord Claverton confesses his guilty past to his daughter and her fiance the barrister Hemington, and is relieved of the burden on his conscience. He tells them that he has won Monica's love on false pretences. In neither of the blackmail cases was he guilty of a crime, but he was guilty of sin. Crime relates to law which everybody can appreciate, but sin relates to the sinner who alone appreciates the significance of what he has done or omitted to do. The old man was later run over by a lorry, but the driver stopped and he was arrested. He was discharged after it was established that the old man was run over after he was dead. In the other case, Mrs. Carghill, formerly Maisee Betterton, or to use her stage name Maisee Montjoy, had already been compensated. In both cases the blackmailers had profited. Even so, Claverton had been responsible for the fall of Culverwell and for the misery of Maisee. He atones for his sins by confession and contrition. He puts off the mask he had been wearing so long and reverts to the man he actually was. As soon as he does this he realizes his third mistake, viz. that of dominating his son Michael by compelling him to take that job so that he may perpetuate the family name and title. Regaining his real self, he begins to realize the meaning of love. Although Michael has rejected him, he will not reject Michael.

Christopher Fry (1907-) emerged as a poetic playwright in the 40s and has since been producing highly ingenious comedies and religious plays. He is particularly distinguished for his verse which in its lightness and elegance approaches that of early Shakespeare. He affirms traditional values of faith, hope and charity. His plays include *Venus Observed*, *A Sleep of Prisoners*, *The Dark is Light Enough*, *The Lady is not for Burning*, *Curtmantle*.

The Dark is Light Enough (1954). The theme of the play is neutrality or non-intervention which is handled with understanding and sympathy, but without any propagandist bias. The period of the play is the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. An eccentric and saintly old countess gives shelter to the rebels as well as to the army men.

The Lady's not for Burning. This much talked-of comedy deals with the cynical philosophy that life is unendurable. Thomas, the hero of the play, is so fed up with life that he confesses to false

murders so that he may be hanged. The heroine Jannet, a beautiful young woman, is accused of being a witch. She is sentenced to be burnt. The man Thomas was supposed to have murdered is found alive, and so he escapes his wished for punishment. Jannet too is let off, because the Mayor and his family find her very agreeable company at the table. Thomas and Jannet are united.

This strange union is counter-pointed by the story of Alison, a girl who is loved first by Humphrey and then by his younger brother Nicholas. Neither of them is willing to marry her, however.

The period of the play is 14th or early 15th century. which is perhaps designated to excuse the plethora of learned and unfamiliar words that fill it as well as the fantastic main plot.

W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood

The Ascent of F 6. It is a tragedy in two acts.

The play deals with the problem of power and glory. The British plan an attack on the highest mountain, F 6. They are pitted against their rivals Ostnians. The British expedition led by Michael Ransom comes to grief. The question posed in the play is: Why did Michael lead his climbers to a highly probable death? Was it disinterested desire to conquer the peak or desire for fame and applause and glory that come with success? The answer is that the climbers were sacrificed to pride, honour and glory of England.

The play is written in racy and polished blank verse interspersed with rhymes, popular songs, etc.

BOOK TEN

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (CONTINUED)

CHAPTER 50

THE NOVEL (GENERAL)

Vast increase in quantity, but no significant advance in quality—Chief characteristics: eccentric techniques, frank treatment of sex, deeper psychological exploration—Note of crisis—Influences that have changed the character of the novel; Henry James, French and Russian realists, post-impressionists, the new psychology of Bergson, William James and Freud, technology and communism, post-war crisis.

While Poetry has sadly declined in the present century and drama has only painfully recovered some of its old prestige, the Novel has forged ahead and continues to occupy the position it acquired in the Victorian age as the most popular form of literature. Judged by quantity alone the number of novels poured forth by the British and American presses is large enough to swamp all other forms of literature put together. In quality, however, the modern novel has made no significant advance. The modern novelist has developed some new and eccentric techniques; he enjoys greater freedom of expression in the treatment of sex; he delves deeper into the hidden corners of the mind. And he employs these resources to reflect an outlook of crisis, of impending doom and despair. Apart from the demoralising effect of the two world wars on the European mind, the pressures and complexities of a highly technological age—urban, congestion, unemployment, pollution of water and the atmosphere, menace of noise—have made man's life a nightmare. The picture is hideous and distressing.

The truth of it is not denied but is it the whole truth? Is life not worth living? Is it absolutely devoid of joy, beauty, goodness? A half-truth can be worse than a lie. A creative artist sees life steadily and sees it whole. The claim, therefore, that the modern novel is superior to the Victorian because it is realistic is ridiculous. There is not a single modern novelist who can be placed alongside of Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, Trollope or Stevenson; nor is

there a single character in the entire field of modern prose fiction who can match the classics of Dickens and Thackeray. The great writer who can lift the modern novel from its slough of despond has not yet arrived.

The 20th century English novel is best studied against the background of the Victorian novel from which it has evolved. The Victorian society was homogeneous and stable with a generally accepted code of moral and social behaviour. Within this framework the novelist portrayed the interplay between the hero and heroine on one side and the people and institutions around them on the other. The experience of the protagonists brings them a deeper understanding of themselves and of others together with keener discrimination between the genuine and the false, between good and evil.

The Victorian novelist was as much interested in society as in the individual. In a Victorian novel the narrator is the 'omniscient author' who as detached observer comments on the action and even directly addresses the reader.

The evolution of the modern novel from the novel above described may be traced through several more or less clearly marked stages. The influences that changed the pattern of the Victorian novel to what it is today have been the following: (a) Henry James, (b) French and Russian Realists, (c) Post-Impressionists, (d) The new psychology of Bergson, William James and Freud, (e) Technological advance and Communism, (f) Post-war crisis.

(a) *Henry James* (1843-1916). This gifted American, younger brother of William James the psychologist, travelled all over Europe and eventually settled in England, because he found there the bond of a continuous cultural tradition which his country lacked. The fragmented American community did not provide the complex social and cultural life which he wished to portray in his novels and tales. The American novelists of the 19th century—Mark Twain, Hawthorne, Melville, Poe—were interested in the individual rather than in society. This was natural in a nation of pioneers and explorers who led isolated lives and had no social cohesion or common cultural heritage.

Known as 'the Master' because of the meticulous care with which he constructed his stories and polished his style, James taught English novelists a salutary lesson in 'form'. The great novels of the 19th century were, by and large, sprawling and loose in structure. Notable exceptions to this pattern are the novels of Jane Austen and Hardy. The influence of James is reflected in such modern writers as Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamond Lehman and L.P. Hartley. Besides, James was the first novelist who made a minute and penetrating psychological analysis of his characters.

(b) *French Realists*. Side by side with the influence of James was the influence of the French Realists Emile Zola (1840-1902) and Guy de Maupassant (1850-93). The Realists, imitating the French

Impressionist painters headed by Claude Manet (1840-1929), aimed at presenting a scene in its salient features with a few broad strokes, but as they considered the individual a product of environment, they described the environment in minute details or in what is called the Naturalistic style. Further, as they were in revolt against the bourgeois conventions of the Victorians, they emphasised the seamy side of life—filth and squalor, sex, violence and vulgarity. They freely used obscene and blasphemous language. The influence of this 'slice of life' tradition has been pervasive in English as well as American fiction. It may be seen in the work of George Moore (*Esther Waters*, *A Mummer's Wife*, etc.), Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, Baldwin's *Another Country*, Angus Wilson's *Old Men at the Zoo*, *No Laughing Matter*, etc., Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

Much of the cheapness and vulgarity of the realistic novel is undoubtedly due also to the deterioration of manners and morals brought about by the two great wars.

In the early 20th century, the realism of the French school was reinforced by the realism of the 19th century Russian writers: Turgenev (1828-83), Dostoevsky (1821-81), Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Chekhov (1860-1904). If anything, Russian realism is of a grimmer, more tragic kind. Dostoevsky's massive novels *Crime and Punishment* and *Brothers Karamazov* are the grimmest in European fiction. Dostoevsky, however, is more remarkable as the man who anticipated Freud's theories in his penetrating analysis of insanity, neurosis and allied forms of mental sickness.

(c) *Post-impressionists*. In the early 20th century literature felt the influence of a new school of painting called the Post-impressionists.

The first English exhibition of their paintings was held in London in December 1910. Speaking in 1924, Virginia Woolf said: "On or about December 1910 human nature changed." This hyperbole was it seems, a reference to the aforesaid exhibition. The Impressionists were concerned to express the external reality; the post-impressionists wanted to go further and express a new vision of reality—inner or spiritual reality. Imitating the post-impressionist paintings, the younger writers also strove to be more realistic by presenting this spiritual reality which was first reflected in the novels of Marcel Proust in France and then through him in the novels of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

(d) This super-realism may, however, be traced to William James (1824-1910) and Henri Bergson (1859-1941) whose works appeared in the 1890s. James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) compared consciousness to a stream or a river which carries submerged and floating memories and receives constantly changing impressions of the external world. The French philosopher Bergson in his *Matter and Memory* (1896) also stressed the role of memory in perception. In effect all this means that perception is not static but dynamic and

kaleidoscopic. In other words, our impression of the world changes every moment. According to Bergson, the novelist should aim at reproducing 'the rhythm of thought'.

These theories profoundly influenced the work of Marcel Proust (1871-1922) whose massive work—a series of fifteen novels—called *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27) reproduces the memories of a man's past life as they float upon the stream of his consciousness. There is no plot, only great artistry in conveying the constantly changing patterns of memory. Proust exercised considerable influence on the work of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Dorothy Richardson. Among contemporary novelists this "stream of consciousness" technique is best represented by Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* which is planned in twelve volumes. Of these eight have appeared so far.

In the second decade of the century came Freud and his two disciples Adler and Jung*. Freud's theories of sex and the sub-conscious added new dimensions to the study of character. Prudery had prevented the presentation of erotic or sexual love in the 19th century fiction. According to Freud sex is the most powerful urge in human beings which cannot be totally repressed. It demands an outlet, but can get it only on the condition that it is suitably modified to conform to the accepted social code. Marriage, for example, is permitted only at a certain age.

Freudian theory and the work of such authorities on sex as Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) and the Kinsey Report (American) of some twenty years ago encouraged a free discussion of sexual love; but it was sometime before such freedom was allowed in England. D H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* with its poetic treatment of the sexual instinct was suppressed in 1915 as obscene. After the first World War, however, there was a marked change in the public attitude and presentation of sexual love became common, as may be seen in the novels of Aldous Huxley, Somerset Maugham and others. Even so, explicit, undisguised portrayal of sex, was resisted and it was only in 1960 that the ban on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was lifted in England.

Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex or infantile sexuality drew attention to the mother-son relationship and to its effect on the adult who has a very possessive mother. This aspect is studied in the novels of Powell, Angus Wilson and Ivy Compton-Burnett.

*Dr. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) of Vienna settled in England in 1938 after Hitler's occupation of Austria. His daughter Anna Freud, a psychoanalyst, is still in London, though his office in Vienna has now been furnished as a museum. Alfred Adler (1870-1937) also of Vienna and Carl Jung (1875-1961) a Swiss, broke away from their teacher in 1911, each setting up his own school of psychology known respectively as Individual psychology and Analytical psychology.

Adler and Jung both differed from Freud in holding that the latter had placed too much emphasis on sex. Jung substituted for sex the concept of *libido* or life-energy of which sex is only a part. Adler stressed aggression as the more powerful drive in man. What is now known as 'inferiority complex' is an expression of this aggressive instinct.

Sexual perversions like homosexuality are also now freely treated, as in the work of Angus Wilson, Iris Murdoch, Maureen Duffy, and the American James Baldwin.

Freud's ideas of the sub-conscious, anticipated by Dostoevsky, aroused interest in mental disorders like neurosis, insanity, split personality, etc. which would have been regarded as shocking and scandalous by the Victorians. A free discussion of such subjects is a commonplace of contemporary writing, as may be seen in the novels of Faulkner, Patrick White, Bellow, Flannery O'Connor. Jenifer Dawson's *Ha-Ha* (1961) is a penetrating study of a schizophrenic or person with split personality.

Though Freud's theory has been questioned and can be universally acceptable only with considerable modification, there is no doubt that his ideas have had a most profound and wide-spread influence on contemporary thought and literature.

The contribution of the new psychology, as exemplified in experiments of Lawrence, Joyce and Virginia Woolf, was no more than an increased subtlety in the exploration of character and an increased freedom of speech untrammelled by traditional reserve. Advanced psychology has certainly brought deeper understanding of character, but the "stream of consciousness" technique is a mere freak. Even if claims made on its behalf are conceded, the technique reached its ultimate in Joyce. It could go no further. Those few who have attempted to follow him have adapted, not adopted, the technique.

Lawrence, indeed, has many followers among contemporary novelists, but the popularity of sexy novels is no surprise in the highly permissive society of today. Though the question of morals is not entirely unrelated to art, it is not purely a question of art. The fact, however, that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was banned does not prove that it is a great work of art. Pornography masquerading as art cannot fool discriminating readers. The unlettered or putrid minds are the concern of the police, not of the literary historian.

In short, the Psychological Novel has brought no substantial gain to the form either in range or vitality. Compositions essentially weak do not become creative works of art by innovations in technique or by sensational matter.

(e) *Technological Advance and Communism.* Experiments in the Psychological Novel belong to the 20s. In the 30s and even before writers turned to more pressing problems of practical life which came in the wake of advanced science and technology. The most brilliant of the writers who addressed themselves to these problems was Aldous Huxley (1894-1963). Essentially an idealist, Huxley was in quest of right values of life. He was disturbed by the moral and spiritual vacuum created by increased psychological and scientific knowledge. How, for example, can we believe in God and religion when we are told by psychologists that religion is nothing but a rationalisation of 'collective unconscious'—a bundle of primitive beliefs in magic, spirits, witches, gods, virgin mothers, resurrection,

etc? He was critical of the 'social' novelists as well as of the individualistic (or psychological) novelists inasmuch as both reflected traditional values which were responsible for human suffering. In his earlier novels he painted gloomy, disgusting pictures of English society—a society of people who led aimless lives. In *Point Counter Point* he showed how man's conflict between passion and reason made happiness impossible. Though himself over weighted with science he found that science offered no solution. In *Brave New World* (1932), he attacked the scientific utopia of H.G. Wells, and showed that a perfectly efficient technological society freed from all struggle and moral effort would not only be intensely boring but intolerable. In such a society man would cease to be human. The solution he ultimately discovered was selfless love or non-attachment of the *Geeta* (*The Perennial Philosophy*, 1946). His later novels proved to be prophetic; they anticipated the themes of some of the post-war novelists.

Another problem which engaged the attention of the writers a little later was communism. George Orwell (1903-50), a born radical, was at first fascinated by socialism, but later changed his stand and vehemently satirised communistic ideology in *Animal Farm* (1945) and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). In the first the animals on the farm revolt, oust the farmer who had been exploiting them, and take over the farm in the name of democracy. Soon the pigs come to power, and one of them, Napoleon, gains absolute control, establishing a dictatorship over the other animals. They are now far worse off than they were under the farmer. The farm-slogan now is "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." This has become a catch-phrase which we fling at those in power who live in ostentatious luxury while they spout socialistic slogans.

Nineteen Eighty-four develops the theme of *Animal Farm* into a prophetic and nightmarish vision of a communistic state whose rulers exploit modern science and psychology to perpetuate their hold over the masses.

That Orwell was influenced by the Czech novelist, Franz Kafka (1883-1924), is quite apparent. Kafka wrote in German, and his novels *The Citadel* and *The Trial* appeared in English translation in the early thirties and had considerable influence, as may be seen in Rex Warner's *The Wild Goose Chase* and *The Aerodrome*, in Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, and in the novels of Samuel Beckett. Kafka's novels seem prophetic and certainly have a religious significance. They are terrifying allegories of man's state in a world where nothing seems certain and where incredible things can happen. The stories are enveloped in a mystifying haze producing the impression of confusion between waking and dreaming. In *The Trial* a man is accused of a crime which is never specified and which he is sure he has never committed. In the course of the trial, however, the man begins to feel guilty and is finally executed. The most curious part of this whole bizarre business is that the punishment is somehow felt to be just.

(f) *Post-War Crisis and the Contemporary Novel*. The prophecies of Kafka, Huxley and Orwell have proved only too true. We are living

in a state of continuing crisis. To the terrifying effects of the second World War have been added the compulsions and complexities of a technological age which have made life hideous. The situation has been further bedevilled by increasing regimentation or depersonalisation in democratic countries like America and Britain whose inhabitants are becoming hardly distinguishable from those of the communistic states. The solace of religion is all but extinct. Psychologists and anthropologists have between them exploded religion as a myth or superstition. Traditional moral and social values have been jettisoned and no new ones have taken their place. If anything, the spiritual vacuum is filled by dark and sinister forces of anarchism and nihilism. A fear of impending doom has gripped the people. There is a growing feeling that life is a hopeless, a meaningless affair.

It is this Kafka-like vision of chaos and confusion, of a world turned upside down, that haunts producers of contemporary literature—novelists as well as poets and dramatists. It is reflected most strongly and poetically in the dramas and novels of Samuel Beckett. But however poetical, the “absurdist” novels of Beckett are repellent and are a definite proof that Naturalism has reached a dead end. The only hope for the novel, as for other forms of literature, is reversion to the idealistic theory of art—that art depicts things not as they are but as they ought to be. That is the lesson of the two romantic ages.

CHAPTER 51

THE NOVEL : EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Henry James—Conrad—Wells—Galsworthy—Bennett—Maugham—Forster—Priestley—Wodehouse—Virginia Woolf—Joyce—D.H. Lawrence.

Henry James (1846-1916). We begin our survey of the 20th century novel with Henry James who, though a late Victorian, is nevertheless generally regarded as the first novelist who laid down the lines along which the English novel of the future was to develop. Brother of William James, the famous philosopher, he belonged to a great American family which had provided him with every opportunity of intellectual and artistic development. Though an American, his spiritual home was Europe, and after wide travels, he settled in England. Freed from the necessity of earning a living, he devoted himself entirely to the art of prose fiction. His output of short stories and novels was enormous. Through them all runs his pet theme: the impact of Europe on American tourists. Broadly speaking, if you have read one James novel, you have read all. The Americans are fascinated by the civilization of Europe; in comparison, their own civilization, they feel, is so crude, so new and without roots in tradition.

James was an innovator in two respects: minute psychological exploration of character and exquisite craftsmanship in prose style and form. Though his range is limited like Jane Austen's, he is, like her, unique. Since James all novelists have aimed at close psychological examination of their characters and at technical excellence; but in spite of the long strides taken by psychology in our time and the high level of prose artistry achieved by such writers as Conrad, Aldous Huxley, Forster, Elizabeth Bowen and L.P. Hartley, James still remains the supreme master in both fields.

Concerned as they are with minute scrutiny of fine shades of feelings and motives, James's stories have little action. The situations are simple enough, but they have psychological implications of the greatest complexity. To take one example. Isabel Archer (*The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881), a highly refined young lady rejects Goodwood whom she loves because marriage would be incompatible with her idea of freedom—freedom to live a full life untrammelled by the crude

conventions of society. Ultimately, however, she does marry, but makes a wrong choice. Osmond exploits her fortune, etc. and makes her miserable. They separate for a while, Isabel is faced with the choice between freedom and bondage, between 'living' and living death. She chooses the latter and returns to Osmond. She feels the compulsion of her marriage vows and does not want to escape the consequences.

The entire interest of this simple story lies in the skill with which the writer has X-rayed Isabel's highly refined consciousness and superior conscience. In doing so he has also illuminated Isabel's tragic illusion of freedom.

James has been criticised for his bourgeois idealism reflected in Isabel's choice. This is strange. After all, he was a bourgeois writer, and it was traditional values of the upper-middle class which attracted him.

A more valid criticism of James is that his novels lack the stamp of experience. Like the Lady of Shalott he saw life in a mirror and wove elaborate fancies about the people reflected in it. In spite of his psychology and literary craftsmanship he has not created a single memorable character. He cared more for the style than for the subject. The faults of that style are as obvious as its virtues. His highly selfconscious, deliberate, and idiosyncratic manner, with its overwhelming elaboration of trivialities is apt to become tiresome. On the other hand, this manner is at the same time quiet, composed, elegant, without the least trace of anything loud or flashing. It is this rare combination of qualities which is the despair of his followers. James is not everybody's cup of tea. He is meat and drink only to the connoisseur.

The more important of James's numerous works are listed below: *Roderick Hudson* (1876), *The American* (1877), *The Europeans* (1878), *Washington Squire* (1881), *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), *The Bostonians* (1884), *The Aspen Papers* (1888), *Terminations* (1895), *The Spoils of Poynton* (1896), *What Maisie Knew* (1897), *The Two Magics* (1898), *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Ambassadors* (1904), *The Golden Bowl* (1904).

Of autobiographical interest are: *A Small Boy and Others* (1913), *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914), and *The Middle Years* (1917).

Here is a short extract from *The Portrait of a Lady*. Isabel's meeting with Osmond's sister, the Countess Gemini, illustrates James's delicacy of perception.

The Countess Gemini simply nodded without getting up; Isabel could see she was a woman of high fashion. She was thin and dark and not at all pretty, having features that suggested some tropical bird—a long beak-like nose, small quickly-moving eyes and a mouth and chin that receded extremely. Her expression, however, thanks to various intensities of emphasis and wonder, of horror and joy, was not inhuman, and, as regards her appearance, it was plain she understood herself and made the most of her points. Her attire, voluminous and delicate, bristling with elegance had the look of shimmering plumage, and her

attitudes were as light and sudden as those of a creature who perched upon twigs. She had a great deal of manner; Isabel who had never known anyone with so much manner; immediately classed her as the most affected of women. She remembered that Ralph had not recommended her as an acquaintance; but she was ready to acknowledge that to a casual view the Countess Gemini revealed no depths. Her demonstration suggested the violent wavings of some flag of general truce—white silk with fluttering streamers
(Chapter xxiv)

A similar nicety is displayed in the characterisation of Osmond as a pastmaster in the art of prose.
(Chapter xxxix)

George Moore (1852-1933) was an Irishman, studied art in Paris, and after failing as an artist took to novel writing and settled in London. For nearly 40 years, he was one of the leading literary figures of England. He is remembered chiefly by *A Munimer's Wife* (1885) and *Esther Waters* (1894), realistic novels in the French sense, offensive to bourgeois respectability by their frank presentation of sex which was something new at the time. Other interesting works of George Moore are his autobiographical sketches: *Confessions of a Young Man* (1888), *Memoirs of My Dead Life* (1906), and *Hail and Farewell* (1914).

Like Henry James, Moore was fanatically devoted to the artistic ideal, but unlike Henry James he delighted in shocking bourgeois sentiments. He insisted on objectivity and rejected morality in art. He was uncompromising in his attitude and *Esther Waters* was banned. Esther Waters, a poor, simple, unlettered kitchen maid is seduced and becomes an unmarried mother. The novel relates her struggles to obtain a footing in life.

Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). In Conrad the English novel acquired another cosmopolitan like James. He was a Pole who became a Master in the British mercantile marine and a British citizen at the age of 28. His experiences as a sailor in the Far East provided him with much of the matter of his stories. He had great admiration for British character and was fascinated by the English language of which he acquired astonishing mastery. This is shown in the rich, colourful prose of his descriptions of the exotic life of Malayan seas and islands.

As a conscious stylist he belongs to the class of James, but he avoids over-refinement, and is on that account more concise and more readable. In his characterisation too, he steers a middle course, revealing only so much of the 'interior' of the characters' mind as is essential for our understanding. He was concerned with physical reality, and though aware, like James or Dostoevsky, of the 'inner reality' he does not seem to have regarded this as more real than the external world.

If Conrad is sometimes uncritically called a psychological novelist, it is because he is at his best in depicting man in conflict—either with his own weaknesses or with the elements. In this respect, *Lord Jim* holds the first place among his novels. A young sailor in a moment of panic deserts his apparently sinking ship and cannot for-

give himself for this cowardice. Ultimately, he redeems his shame by dying a heroic death.

Conrad had a deep compassion for human misery. A vein of pessimism runs through all his stories—a haunting sense of mystery and fate, which is characteristically Slavonic. Conrad's pessimism, however, is quite different from the doom-and-despair of contemporary novelists.

Conrad's reputation today rests on *Lord Jim* (1900) and the short stories (or shorter novels) called *Youth*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Typhoon* (1902).

His other important novels are *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Chance*. Those for record and reference are: *Almayer's Folly*, *Outcasts of the Islands*, *Under Western Eyes*, *Within the Tides*, *Victory*, *The Shadow Line*, *The Arrow of Gold*, *The Rescue*, *The Rover*, *Suspense* (fragment). *Tales of Hearsay*. Volumes of autobiographical and critical interest are *The Mirror of the Sea*, *Some Reminiscences*, *Notes on Life and Letters*, and *Notes on My Books*.

Kipling (1845-1936). Henry James and Conrad were cosmopolitan liberals; Kipling was a hide-bound chauvinist. Outside professional politicians, he was the most ardent spokesman of Imperialism. With his feudal instincts, he believed that the Anglo-Saxons were the "chosen people" whose duty and destiny it was to rule the world. He loudly proclaimed that people who talked of democracy and equality should be silenced with guns. He carried the white man's burden right up to his grave, blissfully unaware of the nemesis that was to overtake the empire only a few years after his death.

His unpleasant politics, however, should not obscure his literary achievement. Rudyard Kipling, born in Bombay and educated in Devonshire, was a journalist with a versatile literary talent, which found expression in both prose and verse. His verse has already been discussed. His reputation as a prose writer rests principally on one novel *Kim* and numerous short stories, the best being: *Plain Tales from the Hills*, *Soldiers Three*, *Many Inventions*, *The Day's Work*, the two *Jungle Books*, *Captains Courageous*, *Stalky and Co.*, *Just so Stories*, *Puck of Pook's Hill*.

Kipling, like Stevenson, was a born story-teller but without Stevenson's graces. He writes with remarkable gusto of adventure and open-air life. The stories deal with India (Sahebs and Tommies as well as the people), the army, the navy, the jungle and its beasts and a host of other exotic subjects. The style is harsh, even violent, but it attracts those who find the delicacy and subtlety of writers like James wearisome. What offends in Kipling is his excessive cleverness and its display.

Kipling enjoyed enormous popularity with Englishmen of his way of thinking, but this has declined with the rising tide of socialism and internationalism in recent years. Even in his own life-time the

Imperial ideal had been seriously questioned by such socialists as Wells and Shaw.

Kim (1901). This novel presents a vivid picture of Indian life. Kim (short for Kimbal O'Hara), orphaned son of an Irish soldier becomes a street urchin of Lahore, meets a Tibetan Lama and accompanies him in his travels. Recognised, he is adopted by his father's Irish regiment and sent to school. The Colonel notices the boy's aptitude for secret service and assigns him to the Indian agent Hurree Babu. While still very young, Kim captures the papers of some Russian spies in the Himalayas.

The two *Jungle Books* relate the story of Mowgli, a child brought up by wolves, and taught the law and lore of the jungle by Balu (Bhalu) the bear, and by Bagheera, the black panther. Kipling has endowed the animals with memorable individuality.

H.G. Wells (1866-1946). If Kipling was the strongest adherent of imperialism, Wells was the strongest advocate of socialism. He dreamed beautiful dreams of a socialist Utopia inhabited by rational men and women—all clean, healthy and happy: They would eat rational food, wear rational dress (like the ancient Greeks), engage, in rational occupations, and live in perfect peace and harmony. He had nothing but scorn for the English social system with its class distinctions which perpetuated cruelty and injustice. He wanted to abolish all existing institutions, social, political and religious, which he thought were out-dated and irrational. He was an agnostic, and his advocacy was not in the least touched by any sentiment or sense of tradition. He was of the earth earthy and did not believe in heaven or hell or in sin. He attributed all suffering to human folly, to the confusion created by wrong thinking. He admitted the irrationality of human nature, but in his simple-mindedness believed that man was capable of perfection and could be cured of his irrationality by science and education. That this is a fallacy was tragically demonstrated by the second world war which he lived to see. His optimism was turned to utter despair.

Science has done and can do a great deal of good to humanity, but it can also be an instrument of destruction; Hiroshima and Nagasaki will not be easily forgotten. Whatever else it might do, science cannot change human nature. This is precisely what zealous optimists are apt to forget. Human nature is a mixture of good and evil, and we must not expect too much from it. A sinless world is inconceivable. Man can overcome his inherent evil only by identifying himself with the universal Self or God. That is also the way to happiness—such happiness, that is, as is possible to imperfect man.

H.G. Wells, son of a small tradesman, came to literature after serving as a draper's assistant, then as a teacher, and finally after studying science under Dr. Huxley, the biologist. His novels fall into three groups: (a) Scientific romances, (b) Social novels, (c) Sociological novels.

Scientific Romances. These were his earliest books of fiction and have had the widest popularity throughout the world. This group includes *The Time Machine*, *The Wonderful Visit*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *When the Sleeper Wakes*, *The First Men on the Moon*, *The Food of the Gods*, *The War in the Air*. They were all produced between 1895 and 1908. As their titles indicate, they are thrilling stories of scientific marvels some of which are now familiar facts, like aerial warfare and men on the moon. The stories are designed to show the potentialities of science: in theory nothing is impossible to science. The flying saucers, it has been suggested, may possibly be the reconnaissance planes of the Martians; and so the war of the worlds is a possibility. Space has been conquered; conquest of time may follow. This fascinating prospect is the theme of *The Time Machine*, which is perhaps the finest of Wells's imaginative creations. The time machine is pictured as a sort of motor-bike on which you could travel back to the past and forward to the future.

Social Novels. Under this head may be included some half a dozen regular novels of society and character, such as *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, *Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay*, *Ann Veronica*, *The History of Mr. Polly*, *The New Machiavelli*, *Marriage*. They appeared between 1901 and 1912. In them Wells presents ironic pictures of English society as it appeared to him with occasional glimpses of his socialist utopia. Based upon direct observation and personal experiences as a member of the lower middle-class, these novels are, from the literary point of view, the most important of all his works. In the best of these—*Kipps*, *Tono-Bungay*, and *The History of Mr. Polly*—Wells shows himself a true follower of Dickens, not only in his vivid portrayal of the lower middle classes, but also in his pathos, humour and love of eccentrics.

Sociological Novels. In his later novels, especially those written during and after the 1914-18 war, Wells is more of a prophet than a novelist proper. Wells, like Shaw, was a Fabian socialist and such novels as *Mr. Britling sees it through*, *God the Invisible King*, *Men like Gods*, etc. are blue prints for socialist utopias. His solution to the social problems varied from book to book so that it is difficult to pin him down to any particular position. This is, however, no weakness as some critics have objected. In speculative matters progressive shifting of position is a proof of sincerity and strength. Plato had made no provision for laws in his *Republic*, thinking they were unnecessary in an ideal state. Maturer thought, however, forced him to write a whole book of *Laws*.

Wells's non-fiction works, apart from tracts and treatises, are the monumental *Outline of History* (1920) and *Experiment in Autobiography* (1934).

Wells did not succeed in converting mankind or in making the world a better place to live in, any more than Plato and other utopiographers. But to have stimulated thought, to have opened

new horizons, to have stirred a whole generation throughout the world—this was no mean achievement. He will always be remembered as the creator of a new class of scientific romance, as a shrewd recorder of his period and as a fecund and fearless social philosopher. His language is simple, forceful and well adapted to his purposes. He was too busy with ideas to care overmuch for the higher graces of style, but everything he wrote is stamped with the force of his earnest personality. And that is the greatest mark of the artist.

Kipps. How embarrassing sudden prosperity can be to a poor man is beautifully illustrated in this novel. Arthur Kipps is an unlettered assistant in a draper's shop, who unexpectedly inherits £1,200 a year. He is overjoyed, but his joy is short-lived. He gets engaged to a young lady of the aristocracy without money. With her ambition to shine in her circle, she sets about the task of grooming Kipps for his role as her husband. The problems of correct table manners, correct dress and general aristocratic deportment prove to much for poor Kipps, who driven desperate bolts. He marries Ann, his boyhood's love, now a domestic servant. Even this does not end his troubles, for the social obligations of wealth have still to be met. Eventually, he is swindled of almost the whole of his fortune by a solicitor. This loss is a positive relief. His happiness begins only when he sets up again as a shopkeeper.

The early life of Kipps as a draper's assistant has autobiographical interest.

The history of Mr. Polly. This novel is remarkable for the endearing character of its hero. Alfred Polly has been, for the greater part of his life, a total failure—failure in marriage, in business, etc. He is dyspeptic, timid, and thoroughly unbusiness-like. Appalled by the imminent collapse of his business, he sets his shop on fire and runs away. He finds a handyman's job in an inn. The job is ideal but for the landlady's rascally nephew, who threatens him with dire consequences if he doesn't clear out. Seeing his last chance in life threatened, Polly for the first time musters all his courage and defeats the bully who makes a murderous assault.

Tono Bungay. This is interesting principally for its amusing portrayal of a new type of businessman who amasses a fortune in no time by advertising and pushing patent medicines, like the tonic named Tono—Bungay.

John Galsworthy (1867-1933) too was a crusader like Wells, but his crusade was carried on in the quiet unobtrusive manner of the aristocratic English gentleman. His cause—humanitarianism—was humbler and less spectacular than utopianism, and was espoused more specifically in his plays. These have already been examined. As a novelist he criticised the prejudices of the upper class, especially their philistinism, their mental stagnation, and their suspicion of strong emotion. He is best known for his *Forsyte Saga*, a collection of nine novels produced between 1906 and 1934.

The Forsyte Saga is a chronicle of the rich aristocratic family of the Forsytes through successive generations from the late Victorian period to the 1920s. It records the reactions of the Forsytes to the various events of the time—the Great War, the growth of socialism, the general strike of 1926—which undermined the very foundations of their order. In his objective portrayal of this dying order Galsworthy starts with a satire on the money-grabbing class represented by Soames Forsyte, the hero of *The Man of Property* the first novel of the series. He is pictured as a selfish, greedy and grasping tyrant who regards even his wife as a piece of property. As the story progresses, however, Galsworthy develops an indulgent sympathy for Soames, who eventually appears as a loving and self-denying character. What was meant to be a social satire ends in approval of the very values it had set out to attack.

Critics have reacted sharply to this inconsistency. Neo-Marxists, to whom every conservative value is anathema, have accused Galsworthy not only of timidity but also insincerity. Such criticism is absurd. For one thing, Galsworthy was under no obligation to push his characters to their logical extremes; for another, the 'moral' of a story very often occurs to the writer in mid-course. Another reason which becomes clear from other Forsyte stories and sketches is that in spite of his proletarian sympathies Galsworthy could not escape from his own class. Though he criticised the philistinism of the ruling class, he was clear-sighted and honest enough to recognise its charm.

The character of Galsworthy's realism is also different from that of the run-of-the-mill realism of the 20th century. It is a realism touched with romance, in his poetic descriptions of natural scenery, and more particularly in his treatment of passion. In all his stories, he shows himself extremely sympathetic to intense, genuine passion, however unconventional or irregular.

Galsworthy had a high ideal of art which is reflected in his sensitive style and artistic economy. The broad sweep of *Forsyte Saga* which presents a panorama of half a century of the national life with commendable detachment and sense of character makes it one of the great fictional creations of the early 20th century.

The constituent novel of *The Forsyte Saga* first appeared separately and were then issued collectively as triologies as follows:

The Man of Property, *In Chancery* and *To Let*—the first trilogy under the general title of *The Forsyte Saga* (1922).

The White Monkey, *The Silver Spoon* and *The Swan Song*—the second trilogy named *A Modern Comedy* (1929).

A Maid in Waiting, *Flowering Wilderness*, and *Over the River*—the third and last trilogy called *The End of the Chapter* (1934).

Among the lesser of Galsworthy's novels are: *The Island Pharisees* (1904), *The Country House* (1907), *Fraternity* (1909), *The Patrician* (1911), *The Dark Flower* (1913) and *The Freeland* (1915).

Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), a middle class man, educated at London University, made his way to literature through journalism. More versatile than Galsworthy, he wrote novels of many kinds: but he is best remembered as a 'regional' novelist. His best-known novels are set in the pottery district of Staffordshire where he himself was born. They are *Anna of the Five Towns* (1902), *Old Wives' Tale* (1908), *Clayhanger* (1910), *Hilda Lessways* (1911) and *These Twain* (1916)—the last three forming a trilogy issued collectively as *The Clayhanger Family* (1925). In these, Bennett describes with scrupulously realistic details the life of the poor and the middle class in the 'five towns'. The names of the towns are slightly changed; for example Bursley for Burslem, Hanbridge for Hanley, etc.

Bennett, like George Moore, had lived for a number of years in France and imbibed the lessons of the French realists like Zola: but his realism has nothing of their cynicism and indecency. His realism is touched with warm sympathy for his characters. In this, he is not unlike Dickens. Though a stern rationalist and liberal, Bennett is a pure artist in his novels. He makes no comments and preaches no doctrines. His viewpoint is implied in his characters who are convincingly real.

Of Bennett's other novels the three most enjoyable are *The Grand Babylon Hotel* (1902), *The Card* (1911), and *Riceyman Steps* (1923).

Outside fiction Bennett wrote such popular and useful books as *How to live on 24 hours a Day*, *Literary Taste*, and *Things that have interested me*. That Bennett was a delightful personality is further revealed in his *Journals* and *Arnold Bennett's Letters to his Nephew*.

The Old Wives' Tale. It is a longish story of two sisters, Constance and Sophia Baines, daughters of a draper of Bursley. Constance, sober and sensible, marries the humdrum and reliable Samuel Povey, the chief assistant in the shop and spends all her life in Bursley. The passionate and romantic Sophia elopes with Gerald Scales, a rich and charming commercial traveller. An unscrupulous rascal, he compromises Sophia and is forced to marry her. He takes her to Paris where after some time he deserts her. After a hard struggle she establishes herself as a successful lodging-house keeper and lives through the siege of Paris (1870, Franco-German War). She returns to Bursley and spends the rest of her days with her sister.

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965), who died at the age of 91, had come to be regarded as the Grand Old Man of English literature. A major figure of the literary scene, he wrote novels, short stories and plays, besides anthologies, travel books and criticism.

His prose fiction has the same qualities as his plays. He is the plain story-teller whose attitude to the vagaries of human behaviour—cold, detached, poised—gives the impression of a being from another planet, not in the least involved in humanity. He observes closely and records his observation sometimes with acidulous wit. He has no message to convey—religious, social or political. The restraint is deliberate. If these are felt to be negative qualities, they

are counterbalanced by technical perfection of the highest kind—in scenic description, dialogue, characterisation and construction. In both language and style, Maugham is studiously simple, clear, and direct.

The most important novels of Maugham are : *Of Human Bondage* (1915), *The Moon and Sixpence* (1919), *Cakes and Ale* (1930), and *The Razor's Edge* (1944).

Of these the finest is *Cakes and Ale*. It is about a noted novelist whose antecedents are not very complimentary. His name was whispered in company at the time. The lengthy *Of Human Bondage*, once considered his masterpiece falls much below Maugham's level of excellence. *The Moon and Sixpence* is a thinly disguised biography of the Post-Impressionist painter Paul Gauguin. *The Razor's Edge* brings India into the picture and touches on the question of religious faith, but only superficially.

Excellent as these novels are, it is by virtue of his short stories that Maugham will take his place among the classics of English fiction. He was a widely travelled man and most of his short stories are built around the lives of British colonials in Malaysia and other regions of the Far East. Though sex is an important interest in all Maugham's work, it is in the short stories that his pragmatic attitude to morals comes out clearly. He was definitely on the permissive side. In spite of his dogged reticence he is 'caught out' when a character in one of the stories says, obviously with the author's approval, that God treats sexual delinquency with special indulgence.

The collected edition of Maugham's short stories appeared in three volumes in 1951.

E.M. Forster (1879-1970), a late Victorian liberal, was modern only in his agnosticism and in his dislike of old-fashioned sexual morality (*Howards End*). Besides some short stories he wrote only five novels: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910), and *A Passage to India* (1924). He was at home in the stable Victorian society but said he felt unable to write about the chaotic modern world.

His scanty production notwithstanding, Forster's reputation was very high. This was evidently due to his fine sensibility as a man and his fastidiousness as a writer. His novels are distinguished by sound construction and smooth rhythmical prose style. He wears no mask of objectivity and his subjective comment is as refreshing as the suspense of his plot is exciting.

Forster was an individualist, one who affirmed the supreme value of the individual. Personal relationships, according to him, were the most important thing in life. In an essay entitled 'What I Believe', he says that loyalty to his friend out-weighs loyalty to his country.

The theme of his novels is the difficulty to contact between indi-

viduals and organised, conventional groups. This problem is well illustrated in *A Passage to India*, almost universally acclaimed as his best novel. The two groups here are the English society of Chandrapore and the Indian community. Is it possible for an Indian to be friends with an Englishman? The answer after a long course of interaction is 'No, not yet', 'No, not there.' That is to say, not until the English are ousted and both meet as equals. Fielding does attempt to grasp the hand of friendship extended by Dr. Aziz, but he doesn't go far enough. His incapacity to shed his imperial skin altogether is understandable. Forster knew this better than some of his critics.

The plot, of course, is fantastic. The episode of the Malabar Caves, Miss Adela Quested's allegation of rape by Dr. Aziz, his trial etc.—all this is highly improbable. But this does not affect the basic realism of the Indian scenes or the dichotomy of human society which is the thesis of the novel.

Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) is an important contribution to the craft of fiction.

Hugh Walpole (1884-1941) was a prolific writer of novels of many kinds, and was deservedly popular in his time. He was a competent and engaging writer with a real gift for story-telling, and his level of performance was uniformly high. His reputation has, however, sadly declined today presumably because the critics have joined in censuring him for writing too much and for his alleged superficiality. The real reason seems to be not lack of depth but lack of individuality.

Walpole's best work is contained in *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill* (1911), a powerful story of antagonism between two schoolmasters, and *The Herries Chronicle* comprising six novels: *Rogue Herries*, *Judith Paris*, *The Fortress*, *Venessa*, *The Bright Pavilions* and *Katherine Christian*. These were published between 1930 and 1944. It is a saga of generations from Elizabethan times to our own day. The plan of including two more books could not be completed because of the author's death.

Ford Madox Ford. A cruelly neglected writer of this period is Ford Madox Ford (1873-1939). The reviewers rejected him because he wrote too much, and in doing so perpetrated an injustice which later critical opinion is slowly but steadily undoing. His quartet *Parade's End* (1924-1928) comprising *Some Do Not*, *No More Parades*, *A Man Could Stand Up* and *Last Post* deserves a place among the great works of 20th century fiction. These four novels trace the career of Christopher Tietjens, "the last Tory", against the background of the first World War. The character is unforgettable. With his out-moded notions of honour and chivalry—Chaucer's 'parfit gentil Knyght'—he fights the newer tribe of opportunists and bouders. However quixotic he may appear to modern eyes, Tietjens is a shining example of English gentleman of the old vintage, representing something that is of fundamental value in humanity. He is one of the greatest characters of modern English fiction. Another English

gentleman of the same type is Ashburnham in Ford's tragic novel *The Good Soldier* (1915).

J.B. Priestley (1894-), one of the Old Guards, won enormous popularity with *The Good Companions* (1929), a massive novel in the Dickens tradition. Equally massive and Dickensian are *Angel Pavement* (1930) and the recent *They Walk in the City* (1961) and *Lost Empires* (1965). *The Good Companions* recounts the adventures of a touring concert party in the late 20s, now a vanished tribe. *Lost Empires* describes another institution long dead—the music hall. The same interest in the fast-changing aspects of society is reflected in *Angel Pavement* and *They Walk in the City*. His shorter novels like *Daylight on Saturday* (1943) and *Bright Day* (1946) show how alive he is to the present.

Because of the Dickensian qualities of his novels—their gusto, hearty humour, picaresque and grotesque characters—Priestley has been dismissed as un-intellectual by high brow critics. How intellectual he is may be seen in his plays, essays and criticism. His *Mereaith* in the "English Men of Letters" is one of the most penetrating critical assessments in that famous series. The more recent *Literature and Modern Man* (1960) is a notable and influential contribution to literary history.

Women Novelists

Women had distinguished themselves in the 19th century as poets and novelists and some of them—Jane Austen, The Brontës, George Eliot, Mrs. Browning—are among the greatest names in English literature. With greater opportunities of education in the 20th century it was inevitable that more and more women should compete with men in the popular field of fiction. Those of the first quarter of the century include Baroness Orczy, Countess Russel, May Sinclair, Mary Webb, Katherine Mansfield, Rose Macaulay, Victoria Sackville West, and Rebecca West.

Baroness Orczy (1865-1947) was of Hungarian birth. She settled in England and became immensely popular for her romantic stories of the *Scarlet Pimpernel*. The hero, an indolent man of fashion rescues the nobility from the terrors of the French Revolution. Besides the many sequels to *Scarlet Pimpernel* she wrote other historical romances. Her last novel *Links in the Chain of Life* (1946) is autobiographical.

Countess Russel (1866-1941), a gentle satirist made her name by ridiculing the Germans in *Elizabeth and her German Garden* (1898) and several other volumes. May Sinclair (1879-1946) produced her most ambitious work in *The Divine Fire* (1904), a study of a poetic genius, which does not quite succeed. The same failure marked her psycho-analytical *Mary Olivier* (1919). Mary Webb (1883-1927) was a gifted writer of country life, but her novels *Precious Bane*, *Gone to Earth* and others were never popular because of a highly conscious and intense style. Katherine Mansfield (1888-

1923). wife of Middleton Murray, was born in New Zealand. She won high reputation as a writer of short stories: *Bliss* (1920), *Garden Party* (1921), *The Dove's Nest* (1923), and *Something Childish* (1924). Victoria Sackville West is known by one title *The Edwardians*. Because of their significant contributions in more recent years, Rose Macaulay and Rebecca West will be noticed later.

Comic Novelists

Jerome K. Jerome (1859-1927), a very popular writer, is still remembered for his hilarious *Three Men in a Boat* (1889). Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932) made his reputation by the exquisite sketches for children: *The Golden Age* (1895) and *The Wind in the Willows* (1908). W.W. Jacobs (1863-1943), a writer of short stories, is famous for his humorous sketches of Thames-side mariners in such collections as *Many Cargoes* (1896), *The Skipper's Wooing* (1897), *A Master of Craft* (1900) and *Night Watches*. H.H. Munro 'Saki' (1870-1916), a journalist, won fame as a political and social satirist in his short stories: *Reginald* (1904), *Reginald in Russia* (1910), *The Chronicles of Clovis* (1911) and *Beasts and Superbeasts* (1914). He wrote only one novel *The Unbearable Bassington* (1912).

P.G. Wodehouse (1881-). The greatest name in humorous fiction, P.G. Wodehouse has contributed more innocent mirth to millions than any other writer since Mark Twain. He has enriched the British national mythology with such immortal creations as Bertie Wooster, the aristocratic idiot and Jeeves, his grave, portly and resourceful valet (in the *Jeeves* series) and Lord Emsworth and his Berkshire pig Empress of Blandings (in the later *Blandings Castle* series). His genius for humour was, however, never better displayed than in a crisis in his own life. In the second World War, he was captured in France by the invading Germans who forced him to broadcast on their behalf. He said: "The Germans are the most wonderful people in the world. Proclaim it to the people; communicate it to the army; tell it to the marines." The Germans were completely taken in. They did not know that "tell it to the marines" is an idiom meaning: it's all humbug.

It is impossible to list here his numerous novels and short stories. No Wodehouse fan can have missed any of them. His brand of farcical humour and his brand of polished English are both inimitable. He has been honoured with an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by the University of Oxford. It is surprising he has not yet received the Nobel Prize for literature. At 90 the doyen of Englishmen of letters, he now lives as an American citizen in Remsenburg, Long Island (New Jersey USA) with his wife and a host of cats, dogs and other pets.

The Psychological Novel

In order that the reader may follow the technique of the Psychological Novel of Proust, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, it is necessary to amplify a little the new concepts of time and consciousness referred

to in the Introduction. Time, say the psychologists, is a continuous, unending, stream like a river. The river flows into the sea. The same river is again filled with water evaporated from the sea. Time too, they maintain, has a circular motion and nothing is lost. (It will be remembered how Eliot has used this idea in his poetry).

The stream of consciousness is cluttered with memories, some floating, others submerged. Here also (as in a river) nothing is lost. The past is not dead and gone: it lives in the present in the sense that our reactions to past events are stored in the consciousness. The truth of a character at any given moment or in a small space of time (say a single day or night) is the sum total of his previous reactions. His reaction to any present event is, therefore, conditioned by this totality. It follows that in order to reveal a person's character all that is necessary is to explore microscopically all the levels of his consciousness: Conscious, Subconscious, and Unconscious. It is not necessary to make the character go through a series of trials and crises in a chronological sequence to reveal the final truth about him—through his speeches and actions. The sequential method is superseded by the psychological. In short, the psychological novel studies character in depth, not in length.

The psychological novelists were not satisfied with reality as presented by conventional novelists like Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett. Virginia Woolf called these writers—her contemporaries—"materialists" in that they rendered only the surface of life, the external world of matter. According to the psychological novelists the real reality is the inner, the deeper reality of the mind and the spirit, unalloyed by anything external. This reality, moreover, is not something permanently significant, something that would be recognised as significant and valuable by the readers, but something that is significant to them personally—this or that trivial object or incident in everyday life—depending on the shifting moods or whims, feelings or fancies, of the writer. Mrs. Dalloway, for example (in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*) opens her front door to go out shopping, and as she does so has a feeling similar to the one she had on opening the French window of the house she had lived in many years ago as a girl. This feeling, trivial in itself, launches Mrs. Dalloway on her stream of consciousness, and is charged with great significance for the novelist. Lest this earth-shaking significance be lost upon the reader, the novelist takes pains to convince him. In the chaotic world of James Joyce the question of significance does not arise. The same thing is significant or insignificant depending on the point of view which keeps continually shifting. Bloom in *Ulysses* is hero or hoax, depending on how you look at him. A novel constructed on such a private and personal view of the significant in experience is bound to be erratic.

The scheme of the "stream of consciousness" novel rules out plot or story. Instead, we have a maze of interminable impressions or "interior monologues" of one or two characters that can hardly sustain the interest of the reader. No reader can be thrilled by mere

technique, however subtle. And the technique itself is counterproductive. It defeats the very end it is designed to serve. Human nature is very complex. To adopt a highly complicated technique to reveal it is to make confusion worse confounded.

Marcel Proust (1871-1922) was the first to use this technique in his huge novel *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* which portrays the aristocratic Parisian society of the immediate past. What is distinctive about his method of recovering the past is his emphasis on sensation rather than memory. His intense concentration on sensation—sensation of scenes and people—gave him the insight which produced his wonderful gallery of portraits (Proust's work has been translated into English by C.K. Scott Moncrieff).

James Joyce (1882-1941) an Irishman of Dublin, was educated for priesthood in a Jesuit College. He was a musician, had a flair for languages which he taught for some time in Italy and Switzerland, and finally settled in Paris. After a collection of verse *Chamber Music* (1904) and *Dubliners* (1914) a volume of realistic short stories of low life, he first attracted attention by his autobiographical novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). This revealed Joyce as a rebel who broke all ties with Ireland—its society, religion, politics. Its only interest now is that its hero Stephen Dedalus appears in a secondary role in *Ulysses*, his masterpiece. It was published in Paris (1922) and was for long unobtainable in England where it was banned because of its indecencies.

This giant-sized and over-discussed book recounts the events of a single day (16th June 1904) in Dublin, dealing with three main characters: a Jew named Leopold Bloom who is an advertisement canvasser, his musical wife Molly, and a young poet Stephen Dedalus who is no other than Joyce himself. We are admitted to the innermost thoughts of all the three, but the book is mostly an unending stream of Bloom's consciousness pouring out his half-articulate impressions of the day. These "interior monologues" are delivered in a telegraphic lingo hard to describe and harder to follow. To the casual reader the book is a loose jumble or miscellany, but Joyce's enthusiastic admirers discern in it an unmatched rigidity of form. They point out that each chapter of the book corresponds to some episode in Homer's *Odyssey*. For example, Bloom at lunch is Ulysses falling among Sicilian cannibals the Laestrygones who sank eleven of his twelve ships and devoured their crew. Bloom's visit to a newspaper office is Ulysses in the cave of Aeolus, god of the winds; his visit to the brothel is Ulysses in the power of Circe, the enchantress who turned men into swine. Dry, ironic humour runs throughout the book. The connection between the newspaper office and the Wind god is a sly hit at the orators—the "wind bags". This humour, however, becomes repellent in the too realistic descriptions of certain digestive functions in unprintable language.

Whether this parallelism industriously worked out by admiring critics really exists or not, what is certain is that *Ulysses* in its basic

structure is mock-heroic in its comic and ironic resemblance to the *Odyssey*. Ulysses of Homer returned to his chaste wife Penelope after 20 years of adventure; the unheroic Bloom (he is afraid of piles) returns to his adulterous wife Molly after his day's adventures at night. Ulysses killed his wife's importunate suitors; Bloom is quite complacent about Molly's infidelities. Stephen Dedalus is shown as the spiritual son of Bloom to correspond Telemachus, the son of Ulysses, though this is not very convincing.

Apart from the virtuosity of form denied by some and stoutly claimed by others, the book is a compendium of prose styles of all kinds. Each chapter has a style appropriate to its subject. For example, in the chapter dealing with the Maternity Hospital the growth of the foetus in the womb is symbolised by the development of English prose from *Beowulf* to the latest American slang. The skill of the book is amazing.

If the puzzled reader asks what is the point of it all, there is no direct answer. Joyce's admiring critics, however, elucidates the philosophical implications of the novel. First—so the critics say—Bloom is not only himself whether hero or hoax depending on your point of view, for "there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so", he is also everybody else. In him is figured all humanity, for we are all involved in one another. Second, they argue, the particular set of situations encountered by Bloom symbolise all human experience, all human history. In short, you have all humanity and all eternity in one grain of sand, *i.e.* within the framework of *Ulysses*.

This is, of course, a very peculiar and unsatisfactory view of the everlastingly significant in human life. To call it a kind of mysticism is one way of closing the matter; to dismiss it as mere eccentricity is another. The least controversial thing about the book, however, is that it is unintelligible, simply unreadable. A voluminous lexicon would be necessary to explain its allusions to Dublin life. One wonders whether the result justifies the tremendous effort the book must have cost the author.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce had probed the consciousness of a waking mind. In *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) he explored the consciousness of a sleeping mind—a single night's dream world of a Dublin publican named H.C. Earwicker. The linguistic monstrosities he invented to do justice to this dream are breath-taking. These are so manipulated as to make the dream (incidents in a popular Irish ballad) an epitome of all human history. Coming as it did after *Ulysses*, *Finnegan's Wake* was in the nature of an anticlimax.

James Joyce had pushed psychological subtlety and linguistic ingenuity to their logical—or illogical—extremes. No one could go farther on that road. Those who followed the stream of consciousness technique are pale shadows beside him. Of these Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Joyce's exact contemporary, is the most considerable. She was the daughter of Leslie Stephen, brought up in an atmos-

phere of books and high culture. She was more of an essayist than a novelist. To call her one of the most important novelists of her time is one of the vagaries of 'high brow' criticism. Her better known novels such as *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), and *The Waves* (1931) are no more than awkward experiments in the 'stream of consciousness' method. They have no story, no life, no movement.

The characters whose consciousness she explores are mere reflections of her own refined sensibility. After enduring a few pages of the much talked about *Mrs. Dalloway*, the reader throws away the book in sheer irritation. She wrote fine poetic prose of which *Orlando* is the best example. It is, however, as uninventive as the others. It is English history from the Elizabethan days to modern times related by a character, apparently immortal, who from male becomes female exactly half-way through the book. Her critical essays *The Common Reader* (two series) are better testimonies to her intellectual penetration and fine taste.

Dorothy Richardson with a more real talent for fiction followed Proust in producing a story continued through ten separate books called *Pilgrimage* (1915-31). This detailed study of a heroine, however, is as dull as anything of Virginia Woolf's. Her importance lies in starting the fashion of serial or instalment novels, which is now extensively practised by British and American novelists, of whom, however only one viz. Anthony Powell (*Music of Time* to consist of 12 volumes) shows the influence of Proust.

D.H. Lawrence. A different kind of psychological novelist was D.H. Lawrence. Influenced by Freud's psychology of the "Unconscious" and sex 'repression' and by Bergson's glorification of instinct as opposed to reason, Lawrence came to hate modern civilization, its science and materialism. He rejected intellect and reason as misleading and affirmed his faith in intuition, instincts and emotion. He developed his cult of the body and worshipped the natural man. While Joyce and Virginia Woolf found nothing permanently significant in the random impressions of their characters, Lawrence found the real and the significant in erotic love. He believed that human beings could achieve integration and self-fulfilment only in sexual union. In *The Rainbow*, he uses a poetic symbol—the arch of the rainbow—to signify this oneness of the lone, separate individual with the Universe. His other novels such as *Women in Love*, *Aaron's Rod*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Virgin and the Gipsy* are amplifications and illustrations of this creed.

Like Joyce, Lawrence has loud attackers and equally loud defenders. His admirers go into raptures over the combination of psychological realism and poetic intensity with which he presents his mystique of erotic love. They ignore the pathological excess of this combination. The psycho-sexual details are overdone and the style overwrought, both betraying a diseased mind.

The line that divides literature from pornography is a thin one and

Lawrence crossed it unhesitatingly. It has been suggested that the aggressive displays of sexuality in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) and *The Virgin and the Gipsy* (1930) reflect his incurable sense of social inferiority. The son of a Midland miner of small means, a consumptive, a schoolmaster of ordinary education (no public school and university), Lawrence revenged himself on the upper classes by glorying in the gamekeeper's and the gipsy's conquests of socially superior women.

Whatever the explanation, the novels reveal a vulgar-minded exhibitionist. Lawrence possessed undoubted literary power, but it was harnessed to unworthy purpose. His mystical rhapsodies of the flesh do not enhance life. He lacked the discipline of art, and though he will continue to appeal to smut-hounds, he is no creative novelist.

Lawrence's other novels are: *Sons and Lovers* (autobiographical), *Kangaroo* (set in Australia), *The Plumed Serpent* (set in Mexico). Besides, there is a collection of his short stories. In search of health and congenial society he travelled in Italy, Sicily, USA and Mexico. His close observations are recorded in poetic prose in such travel books as *Twilight in Italy* and *Sea and Sardinia*.

CHAPTER 52

THE NOVEL: MIDDLE AND LATER 20TH CENTURY

Aldous Huxley—Orwell—Hartley—Koestler—Evelyn—Waugh—Graham Greene—Joyce Cary—Beckett—Lowry—Golding—White—Wilson—Angry Young Men—Women Novelists.

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), the grandson of T.H. Huxley and the grand nephew of Matthew Arnold, combined the brilliance of both the strains. He was essentially an idealist and a teacher, though this aspect of his is more fully expressed in his poems, essays and such travel books as *The Jestling Pilate* (1926) and *Beyond the Mexique Bay* (1934). His novels, the most brilliant, the most stimulating and the most enlightening of the century, afford a most interesting study of the progress of an acutely sensitive mind from incertitude and doubt to certainty and conviction. His early novels produced in the 20s—*Chrome Yellow Mortal Coils*, *Antic Hay*, *Those Barren Leaves* and *Point Counterpoint*—are cynical, disgusting and pessimistic pictures of human degradation amidst which the author seems to be groping for a possible solution to the problem of a world emptied of all moral values. His later novels of the 30s and 40s beginning with *Brave New World* (1932) reflect a gradual shift to optimism culminating in the firm conviction of *The Perennial Philosophy* (1946). He discovers in the *Geeta* the true recipe for happiness, viz. detachment from the material world of possessions and attachment to the Universal Spirit which supports it.

Brave New World. This is a fable which depicts a scientific Utopia of the Wellsian conception. In this world of the future men are scientifically conditioned to perfect happiness. Human babies are not 'born', they are 'decanted' out of test tubes. They are treated chemically according to the functions they will perform as grown-ups. They are divided into four classes: Alpha, Beta, Delta and Epsilon—a classification analogous to the Hindu hierarchy of caste. The numbers in each class are strictly regulated by the needs of the community. All conceivable civilized comforts, including unlimited sex, are provided for each class according to its status in the hierarchy. In

case of fatigue or tension one has only to take a tablet or two of 'Soma', a miracle drug. The problem of transport is solved by helicopters which take off from the roofs of the sky-scrapers. For entertainment among other things, there are 'feelies', something like the cinema but far more intimately enjoyable. Their era is that of "Our Ford."

Into this world comes a Savage from the outlawed ancient world who quotes Shakespeare. He is disgusted with its mechanical perfection; finding neither art, beauty or religion on one hand, nor squalor and sin on the other, he hangs himself.

A state of perfect happiness is frightfully dull and unendurable. Man has no independent choice; all his thoughts and actions are conditioned, pre-determined, Drowned, as it were, in a sea of happiness, he loses his most precious possession, his personality, individuality. He ceases to be human. It is better to be stupid and free than rational and fettered.

While *Brave New World* is a satire ridiculing the scientific Utopia of Wells, Huxley builds a real Utopia of his own in *Island* (1962), his last novel. This island is inhabited by people of mixed race who are fully aware of man's weaknesses as well as his potentialities. They find their formula of happiness in a philosophy which is a judicious mixture of Eastern religion and Western science.

Huxley's later novels are: *Brave New World*, *Eyeless in Gaza*, *After Many a Summer*, *Time Must have a Stop*, *Ape and Essence*, *The Genius and the Goddess*, *Brave New World Revisited*, *Island*.

Huxley was only the first in the chain reaction started off by Wells. Others followed. Orwell's *Animal Farm* is a satirical retelling of the Russian revolution; *Nineteen Eighty-Four* looks into the Communist Utopia which was then (1949) 35 years away and is now (1975) nearly upon us. How prophetic Orwell's vision was has been demonstrated by the happenings behind the Iron Curtain. We are now familiar with the rigours of the Party machine, its perpetual surveillance over its members, tortures, brain-washings, confessions and rehabilitations. Such words of the book as "Big Brother" (the eternal dictator) and "doublethink" have passed into current speech. The technique of "doublethink" can alter even mathematical certainties so that two times two is not four but five. There is no law, rule or truth higher than the State. Even Huxley admitted that Orwell's vision of the future was more real than his own.

The same absurdity of a totalitarian regime has been more fantastically revealed by L.P. Hartley (1896-) in his *Facial Justice* (1960). Here we have an England recovering from the ravages of World War III: Atom bombs have been dropped, and survivors are returning from caves and hide-outs to build a new and reformed social order. The new society suffers from a sense of guilt and every one of its members is named after a murderer. The heroine, for instance, is named Jael 97, like a convict. It is a sinless society and all competition is banned. Economic equality is matched by equality in beauty. A

girl who considers herself "facially under-privileged" can get a face-lift to attain to the average standard of beauty (neither ugly nor beautiful). Jael 97 has more than her equitable share of beauty; she must, therefore, be levelled down to the average. She is, however, an eccentric girl. At the first sight of the western tower of the beautiful Ely Cathedral she is filled with ecstatic joy and revolts against the regime.

Other notable novels of Hartley are: *The Eustace and Hilda* trilogy (1944-47) comprising *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, *Hilda's Letter* and *Eustace and Hilda*; *The Go-Between* (1953), *A Perfect Woman* (1955), *The Brickfield* (1964). *The Betrayal* (1966).

The impossibility of building a perfect moral or political system is further illustrated in *The Aerodrome* (1941) of Rex Warner (1905-). An ordinary English village inhabited by ordinary people as imperfect as the rest of humanity is visited by a totalitarian organisation called The Air Force. They promise to clean up the whole dirty mess and turn the men into perfect human beings—sinless, disciplined, efficient machines. It is the same dilemma: the choice between human imperfection and free will on one side and mechanical perfection and slavery on the other.

In this allegory, as in *The Wild Goose Chase* (1937) which has a similar theme, Warner employs the Kafka-like technique of nightmarish confusion. *The Wild Goose Chase*, however, has no explicit meaning beyond that implied in the title. His other novels written with the same technique are *The Professor* (1938), *Man of Stones* (1949). He has now turned to historical novels.

So far we have dealt with novels or rather fables which are satires on totalitarian regimes. There are political novels of another kind which are not satirical fantasies but forthright revelations of the inside of governments, politicians and revolutions. Such are the novels of Arthur Koestler (1905-) and Maurice Edelman (1911-). Koestler has achieved world-wide fame for his shocking revelations of the Soviet purges in his *Darkness at Noon* (1940). Another of his novels *Thieves in the Night* (1946) is about heroic struggle of the Israelites trying to settle in their ancient homeland. Edelman, an M.P., tells us what goes on behind the scenes and the House of Commons in *Who Goes Home?* (1953) and *A Call on Kuprin* (1959). Light is thrown on the darker aspects of political life in *The Minister* (1961) and *The Prime Minister's Daughter* (1964). Such novels have immediate modern relevance, but politics and politicians have dirty connotations and do not attract refined minds.

Evelyn Waugh (1902-66), a popular novelist of the 30s, leapt to fame with his war trilogy *The Sword of Honour* comprising *Men at Arms* (1952), *Officers and Gentlemen* (1955), and *Unconditional Surrender* (1961). Waugh was a Catholic convert, had served in the war and travelled widely in Europe, the Near East and South America.

Guy Crouchback, a Catholic gentleman, lives in a castle with his beautiful wife Virginia. In his late thirties his wife leaves him. To fill the void in his life he joins in the war and dedicates his life to

his country. As the war proceeds he becomes gradually disillusioned. Gentlemen disappear and in their place rises a new type of hero, a man of the masses, exemplified in Trimmer, a ship's barber, who rises to the command of a platoon of commandos by sheer bluff. He is a cowardly rascal who makes Guy's wife pregnant. Waugh's experiences of war service are employed to good purpose, and the story of Europe's struggles against Hitler is rendered with great power, accuracy and humour. Some of the episodes are very funny. Military honours are awarded to sham heroes for their alleged exploits. Guy regrets the passing away of the old order with its Christian ideals and chivalric values; but his religious faith remains unshaken and he makes "unconditional surrender" to the inevitable, to the fact of history. At the end, all his illusions swept away, he shows unusual moral courage by remarrying his wife who, he knows, is carrying another man's child. This annoys his brother-in-law (sister's husband) who had hoped his wife would inherit Guy's estate. This rather tame ending spoils an otherwise fine novel.

War novels have ephemeral interest, but this trilogy will be long remembered for the character of Crouchback. He reminds us of another Christian gentleman suffering in a muddled world—Tietjens of Ford Madox Ford's tetralogy. Waugh has done for the second world war what Ford had done for the first.

A noteworthy feature of this trilogy is the total absence in it of sex and violence so common in modern fiction, and so dominant in the war fiction of America (Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, 1948). Waugh's style is elegant, economical, light and colloquial. In his earlier novels of which *A Handful of Dust* (1934) is the best, Waugh satirised the upper classes of the 30s. They are very amusing. But his better-known novels outside the trilogy are: *Put Out More Flags* (1942) *Brideshead Revisited* (1945), and *The Loved One* (1948).

A common criticism of Waugh is that his novels are superficial and are marred by snobbery and cruelty. This is certainly the impression produced by the earlier novels. The faults are explained by their satirical intention, though this hardly justifies the callousness of *The Loved One* in which he mocks the burial customs of California. The truth is that in his earlier novels Waugh was struggling for expression and did not find himself until the war suggested a central character embodying his criterion of good and evil.

Graham Greene (1904-), also a Catholic, is a novelist of great stature, but his appeal is severely restricted by his too orthodox an interpretation of the faith. His novels are novels of purpose designed to illustrate his belief that man is inherently evil (original sin) and nothing but God's grace can save him. As a professional journalist Greene has travelled widely and his settings and characters are quite convincing. In spite of this and the additional merit of his slick, conversational style, his novels are not quite satisfying. The reader can judge for himself from the following plot-outlines.

Brighton Rock (1938). A young Catholic rascal pursues evil open-eyed. A decent woman who is convinced he has murdered her holiday friend pursues him. The young hoodlum is better than the decent woman because—so the logic of the book runs—she believes only in right and wrong, which are relative and man-made values, while the boy, a Catholic, however fallen, is wedded to good and evil which are absolutes. The criminal has embraced Evil which is an ultimate reality; belief in the Devil is better than belief in the merely right.

✓ *The Power and the Glory* (1940). The setting is Mexico. An outlawed priest—drunken, depraved and cowardly who fathers a child—sticks to his ministry among the very people in whose name he has been banned. He is undoubtedly a sinner, but he will be saved just because he is a priest, a divine instrument who gives the Sacrament—can turn bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

The Heart of the Matter (1948). The setting is South Africa in war time. Scobie, a married police officer, befriends a helpless young widow who becomes his mistress. He is, to use a tired old phrase, on the horns of a dilemma. He cannot repent and give up the sin of adultery, for that would be leaving the girl to privation. He accepts damnation and commits suicide. The priest at his funeral, however, says that God will yet save him in spite of the sin of suicide, the gravest a Catholic can commit. This is the heart of the matter.

The End of the Affair (1951). In this the Catholic argument is pushed to the extreme. A London adulteress (inevitably a Catholic) dies unrepentant and then strange things happen. A man who had loved her is miraculously rid of an ugly birthmark; a boy who has a book of hers recovers from an incurable disease. The strangest of all miracles is that the narrator, a determined atheist, still burns with such a passion for her that he curses the powers that have taken her away, and in so doing becomes for the first time aware of God. Even hatred of God is a blessing. It is a kind of conversion.

The Quiet American (1955). This is the only novel in which the Catholic faith is not too obvious. The setting is Saigon in the French war against Vietnam Communists. The narrator Thomas Fowler is a neutral or uncommitted reporter. The 'quiet American' is a young man named Pyle who has come to establish a Third Force to defeat the Communists. He explodes a bomb in Saigon which kills and injures many. The point of the book is the contrast between the unimaginative and unfeeling Pyle and the compassionate and humane Fowler who is compelled to take sides and get Pyle out of the way.

With this one exception, Greene's 'religious' novels are unconvincing to non-Catholics. Evil permeates the novels; there is hardly any good. To show man worse than he is, is not realism; it is a travesty of truth more condemnable than sentimentalism which idealises him. As for the special grace reserved for Catholics, it is a dogma which may well be left to those of the faith.

Fortunately, Greene did not spend all of himself on his didactic novels. Besides these, he has written what he calls 'Entertainments'—exciting stories of adventure. These novels—*Stamboul Train*, *A Gun for Sale*, *The Confidential Agent*, *The Ministry of Fear*, *Our Man in Havana*—belong to the best tradition of English thriller.

Joyce Cary (1888-1957) is a strikingly individual writer—the individuality consisting in a toughness of temper that is a refreshing contrast to the sickly sensibility of the psychological school. He harks back to Blake in his reverence for all living creatures and in his belief that the life of imagination is more real than reality. An Anglo-Irish, his career as a novelist began in 1932 after he had retired at forty-four from colonial service in Nigeria. His novels are either about England or about Africa.

Of his African novels the best is *Mr. Johnson* (1939). It is an understanding and sympathetic study of the conflict between alien cultures. Johnson is a negro clerk who has been educated in a Mission school. Like many an Indian under British rule, he dreams of becoming a European, but being simple-minded and childlike he does not see that black and white cannot mix (Cf. *Passage to India*). His aspirations have a tragic result. He is killed like a dog by the District Officer.

After his African studies, Cary produced two for children: *Charley is My Darling* (1940) and *A House of Children* (1941). The first depicts working class children during the evacuation period of World War II; the second reminisces about a large upper class Victorian family. After these came the trilogy *Herself Surprised* (1941), *To be a Pilgrim* (1942), *The Horse's Mouth* (1944)—which represents his finest work.

Exuberant vitality characterises the whole trio. In *Herself Surprised*, Sara Monday relates with gusto her amours with Wilcher, an ineffective lawyer, and with Gulley Jimson, an impoverished artist of genius. Sara is a married woman but she gives of herself wholly to her lovers. She is religious. She "could commit adultery at one end and weep for her sins at the other, and enjoyed both operations at once."

In *To be a Pilgrim*, Wilcher explains his ineffectiveness. Like Hamlet he discusses his disease and in the process glances over the whole political history of England since the beginning of the century upto the second World War. He is a failure because of his unorthodox politics.

The Horse's Mouth, the best of the trilogy, is the memoir of Gulley Jimson. He is an illustration of social non-conformity. Overpowered by his passion for art he gives up a good job and ruins his family. He worships Blake and regards the life of the imagination as the only real one. He lives only for art which for him is both religion and morality. He flouts conventional values and lives the life of a rakish, shiftless Bohemian. When he threatens a millionaire who has swindled him, he is sent to jail. But jail has no

terrors for him. His passion for art is so uncontrollable that he does not mind stealing to provide himself with painting materials. Though poor, he is an artist of genius, and four or five of his pictures have been hung in the National Gallery. The climax is reached when he invests all his hard-earned capital in painting a huge mural called the 'Creation' on the wall of a big rickety garage which, he has been warned, is going to be pulled down because it is unsafe. Intending to gift it to the nation he defies the municipal council and pushes on with the work even while the demolition squad has started operations. The wall, mural and all, comes crashing down and with it the scaffolding on which he was standing. He is carried to the hospital still talking gaily. He is sixty-eight, the year is 1939, and World War II has begun.

The book is a triumph of humorous characterisation reminiscent of Dickens. The breezy, bubbling and happy-go lucky spirit of Gulley Jimson shines through the whole memoir.

The Bohemian world of doss-houses and low pubs he moves in, teems with working class humorists, not the least of them being Sara. The style is a blend of gay abandon and gossipy informality. An episode or two may be strong meat for queasy stomachs, but on the whole the novel has a tonic effect.

Cary's second trilogy—*Prisoner of Grace* (1952), *Except the Lord* (1953), *Not Honour More* (1955)—is almost equally exuberant.

A.J. Cronin (1896-), a doctor and novelist, has been especially popular with sober people for his inspirational novels: *Hatter's Castle* (1931), *The Stars Look Down* (1935), *The Citadel* (1937), *The Keys of the Kingdom* (1941), *Shannon's Way* (1948), *The Judas Tree* (1961).

Christopher Isherwood (1904-) like his friend and collaborator (in plays) the late W.H. Auden, has settled in America and like him become an Anglican. His novels are distinguished by elegant language and style, by wit and humour, and by artistic economy. In *Mr. Norris changes trains* (1935), we are shown the disintegration of bourgeois Germany under the Nazis. In *Good bye to Berlin* (1939), he gives an objective description of life in Berlin in 1939 before the outbreak of the second world war. Moral attitude, however, becomes apparent in his later novels with American settings. *The World in the Evening* (1954), an autobiographical novel, is concerned with the mess Stephen Monk has made of his life by his love affairs including homosexuality. Quaker doctrines would seem to be the remedy. Homosexuality is also the theme of his recent *A Single Man*, which is about an English lecturer in English literature in California.

Henry Green (1905-) an Eton and Oxford man owning a factory in the Midlands has written more than half a dozen novels of which only one called *Living* (1929) about industrial life is worthy of him. Based as it is on his own experience of industry, it has the stamp of authenticity. *Party Going* (1939) has been favourably noticed by some critics, but it is shallow. A party of rich young people are going on a holiday trip to south of France, but they are held up at a

London railway station by fog. The novel is a comic and satiric narrative of the silly frivolities they indulge in to pass the time. His other novels with revealing titles are: *Caught* (1943), *Loving* (1945), *Back* (1946), *Concluding* (1948), *Nothing* (1950), *Doting* (1952).

Samuel Beckett (1906-), Irish by birth, began writing novels in English, but now writes in French, translating them into English afterwards. His English novels are *Murphy* (1938) and *Watt* (1953). His French trilogy recreated in English consists of *Molloy* (1955), *Mallone Dies* (1956) and *The Unnameable*. His latest is *How It Is* (1964).

Like his plays—*Waiting for Godot* and others—Beckett's novels are also absurdist. Being longer conundrums, they are more incomprehensible. Beckett is full of curious learning and his obscure allusions are difficult to follow. From his frequent references to Dante and St. Augustine, it is clear the theme is religious, though it is unsafe to say what precisely it is.

His characters are waifs and strays, the old, the crippled, the destitute, etc. They suffer stoically without expecting help from God. From such names in the trilogy as the tyrant Youdi (Yahudi or Jew) and the messenger Gaber (Gabriel?) one has the impression that the subject is about the same as in *Waiting for Godot*—fruitless search for the mysterious tyrant God.

Beckett denies God; but one has a suspicion that he is aware, however dimly, of somebody like Him hiding somewhere at the back of his consciousness. Is Beckett's manner a pose?

The style of the novels is poetic and their nightmarish atmosphere suggests the influence of Kafka.

Malcolm Lowry (1909-57), son of a wealthy Cheshire cotton grower and broker, was educated at Cambridge. For a year, between public school and Cambridge, he went on a sea voyage which took him to Singapore, China and Japan. Because of a shooting incident during this voyage in which he was wounded in the leg, he could not serve in the war. He travelled widely in Europe, Mexico, USA and Canada. He married twice, both wives being American. It is important to remember that Lowry was a drunkard and died of drunkenness; for the hero or anti-hero of his novel *Under the Volcano* (1947) is closely modelled on the author. His other novels are: *Ulamarine* and *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (posthumous).

Under the Volcano. Though published in 1947, this novel has only recently been recognised as one of the great novels of the century. It is highly complex, the complexity arising as much from its theme as from its Joycean technique of the interior monologue. Luckily, however, the breathless and punctuationless monologues are skilfully integrated with the narrative which makes the story comparatively easy to follow.

In its externals, the story describes the disintegration and death,

through alcoholism, of Geoffrey Firmin, ex-British Consul in Mexico. The period is 1938 and 1939 and we hear echoes throughout the novel of the Spanish Civil War as well as of the impending World War II. Firmin's wife Yvonne has left him and he has resigned, but continues to live at the Mexican town of Quauhnahuac situated at a height of six thousand feet above sea level and overlooking a valley dominated by two volcanoes. He takes to non-stop drinking, and nothing that his wife who has returned and Hugh, his half-brother, can do to restrain, saves him. Hopelessly drunk, he is shot as a spy by the Mexican police. His body is thrown into a ravine and a dead dog after it.

Superficially looked at, a dipsomaniac is a pathetic figure and no subject for a serious, tragic novel. But the novel goes deeper than that. The central interest is Firmin's consciousness. The agony of his spirit is revealed in his ambivalent or contradictory prayers before the Virgin. He prays that he may have Yvonne back, but he also prays to be alone. He prays that he may rise, but at the same time he prays that he may "sink lower still that" he "may know the truth."

He is torn between two choices: love and salvation on one side, and lovelessness and damnation on the other. Love is salvation, life; for no man can live without love. When Yvonne returns, he rejects her, rejects love. He chooses loneliness. For, "Where is love" he asks. "Let me truly suffer". Open-eyed he chooses damnation.

"The real cause of alcoholism," according to Lowry, "is the complete baffling sterility of existence as *sold* to us." Firmin is a cultivated man, an idealist who sees the complete collapse of values all round him. Like Hamlet, he feels lonely, isolated from the world around him. He becomes melancholic and takes to drinking to lose himself or to find himself—he drinks himself sober. His tragedy is related to the tragedy of the world of the 30s—the crumbling of human values, godlessness, man's cruelty to man, the breakdown of a whole civilisation.

The poetic intensity of the novel is due to the fact that Lowry has put in it so much of himself. It is significant that when questioned by the police about his identity Firmin replies that he is a writer. It is as if he himself had written this novel.

William Golding (1911-) until recently a schoolmaster, has emerged as a very original writer who wields a powerful pen on behalf of serious thought. His *Lord of the Flies* (1954) is already a classic. *The Spire* bids fair to be another.

Lord of the Flies. A blend of imagination and vivid realism, this novel presents a microcosm of human history: primitive innocence, making of fire and shelter, hunting for food, painting of bodies and tribal dance, superstition and fear, rivalry and anger, savagery and blood-lust. During the evacuation period of World War II a group of British children are dropped on a coral island. Ralph is voted chief and all goes well for all too short a while. Then the majority

of the boys under Jack take to pig-hunting, painting their bodies, tribal dance, etc. Painting the bodies liberates their savagery. Fear grips them when a 'beast' is sighted on the mountaintop. Simon, one of the boys, investigates and finds that the 'Beast' is only a dead parachutist. While he is coming down to report this, he is taken for the beast and is killed to the chant of "Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!" When the out-lawed Ralph himself is on the point of being hunted down, a cruiser arrives and they are rescued. "Ralph wept for the end of innocence," and "the darkness of man's heart." *Lord of the Flies* (Beelzebub) is the severed head of a pig spiked on a stick and left as an offering to the "Beast". A swarm of flies buzz round it. Golding is convinced that man is inherently evil. The fable is an illuminating commentary on the war and the atom bomb, on what man has done to man.

Laurence Durrell (1912-) has written an impressive tetralogy entitled *Alexandrian Quartet* (1960) comprising *Justine*, *Balthazar*, *Mountolive* and *Clea*. The tetralogy is impressive only in size, not in content or quality. His poetic prose is too inflated for a novel. His elaborate theory of what he calls the 'relativity novel' is simply a statement of the obvious. In every novel, characters and events are only gradually revealed, and everything is made clear at the end. A four-volume novel needs no such excuse.

Patrick White (1912-), an Australian, was educated in England, took a degree in modern languages at Cambridge, travelled widely in Europe and the United States, served in the war with R.A.F. and wrote several novels in England before finally settling down in Australia. The novels written in England are: *Happy Valley* (1939) with Australian setting, *The Living and the Dead* (1941) about the middle class English society and *The Aunt's Story* (1948). Since settling down in Australia he has written five novels: *The Tree of Man* (1955), *Voss* (1957), *Riders in the Chariot* (1961), *The Solid Mandala* (1966) and *The Vivisector* (1971).

Patrick White must be regarded as a major contemporary novelist. He has not only placed Australia on the map of world literature but has given a most welcome turn to prose fiction by his concern with spiritual values which seem to have been all but lost to the younger generation of writers. This commitment to spiritual values is counter-balanced by his satirical attitude to Australian society, its materialism, philistinism and mindless conformism. He is however, careful not to divide people crudely into terms just of black and white. His attitude to Sidney society is undoubtedly unsympathetic, but it does not blind him to its relieving features such as sociability, mutual goodwill and sympathy.

White, however, is not without his faults. The plot, of his novels, especially later novels, are unusual and violent. His style, poetic and intense, is highly idiosyncratic. It fluctuates between verbless sentences, half expressions, unorthodox syntax in the Joycean manner on one side and high-flown rhetoric on the other. Transitions from narrative to author's comment are abrupt and confusing. Allegory,

symbolism, dreams, fantasies, mystic visions, occult metaphors—these are used to an excess which is irritating. It is no exaggeration to call this style of writing bizarre. It is so odd, indeed, that one critic calls *Voss* a 'meta-novel'. It makes unreasonable demands upon the reader and is certainly not in the line of realistic fiction. What is surprising is that White seems altogether unconscious of his excesses.

One can trace a progressive development in White's theme and style towards greater complexity. *Riders in the Chariot* is generally regarded as White's best work, but some may be inclined to give the highest place to *Voss* not only because its plot is less improbable and sensational, but because of the singular beauty of its heroine's character.

Riders in the Chariot. There are four principal characters. Mary Hare, an elderly recluse, lives with her animal pets in a decayed mansion called Xanadu (shades of Coleridge!) in the suburb of Sarsaparilia in Sidney. She is happy in her identification with the world of Nature. Mrs. Godbold is a jolly washerwoman with a numerous brood and a drunken husband. She is content to practise simple virtues. Himmelfarb is a Jewish intellectual who has come to Australia as a refugee from Nazi Germany and is content to work in a factory. Alf Dubbo is a half-caste aboriginal passionately devoted to painting.

All four are virtuous, each in his or her own way, and ride in the chariot which symbolises their spiritual illumination. Under the banner of Evil are two widows Mrs. Jolley and Mrs. Flack. They are stupid philistines who by their machinations bring disaster upon the virtuous characters of the novel. Evil in its most monstrous form, however, is manifested in the mock crucifixion of the Jew by his work-mates resulting in his death.

Voss. This is based on records of exploration of Australia in the middle years of the 19th century by the German Ludwick Leichhardt. Voss, also German, leads an east-to-west expedition which is financed by Sidney businessmen including Mr. Bonner, Mr. Pringle and others. The expedition comes to grief. Some are killed by the desert, others by aboriginals. Frank Le Mesurier slits his throat, Voss is killed by the blacks but his death is misreported by Judd the ex-convict who is the only traceable survivor. A statue of Voss is erected to commemorate him.

Though the expedition fills the greater part of the book, the central interest is the character of Miss Laura Traveyan. She has lost her parents and lives with her aunt Mrs. Bonner. White's portrayal of the Sidney mercantile community of the mid-19th century is unsympathetic. The Bonners and the Pringles are philistine conformists, but Laura stands out for enlightenment and spirituality. When her maid Rose Portion gives birth to an illegitimate child, and dies soon after, she adopts the infant, a girl, as her own child and scandalises her aunt and uncle as well as the other bourgeois members of society. She brings up the child whom she has christened Mercy and

becomes headmistress of a girls' school.

Laura's relationship with Voss is the most puzzling as well as the most unpleasing aspect of the book. They have met only casually two or three times, and yet the intensest mystic communion between the two is revealed in their correspondence. This would not have been unpalatable had Voss been shown a lovable character. He is a hard, egotistical megalomaniac who believes firmly in his own divinity. True, later in the expedition he becomes humble and Christ-like in serving the sick and wounded, but the conversion somehow is felt to be unconvincing. We are to suppose that love which gives Laura strength to endure softens Voss's hardness into humanity, and that this miracle is brought about by Laura's letter recounting her suffering. Voss's character, however, is much too dubious, to say the least, for us to swallow such a pill. In short, we have not been prepared to accept any intimate relationship, romantic or spiritual, between the two.

The Vivisector (1971) is quite as powerful as *Voss*. The hero Hurtle Duffield with a laundress for mother and rag-and-bone man for father is sold for £500 to a rich grazier. He leaves the family after a while to become a celebrated artist of Sidney. The central and most exciting period of his life, however, is that in which he lives in Paris with Nance Lightfoot, a prostitute model. His last troubled years he spends with his hunchback sister. His varied experiences and his artist's intuition give him a splendid vision of man which is artistically amalgamated with the texture of the novel. What distinguishes *The Vivisector* from *Voss* and *Riders* is its witty descriptions. A gloomy guest at a party, for instance, is thus described: "A lady of Presbyterian cast and an inherited pendant locked up her large cupboard of a face."

Though the fashion of telling the same story in a series has been adopted by several modern novelists—Waugh and Cary, for example—there are two writers who have been more ambitious in that they have written much larger sequences. They are Anthony Powell and C.P. Snow (both born 1905). Powell's sequence is planned in twelve volumes of which eight have appeared so far; that of Snow consists of nine.

Of Powell's sequence called *The Music of Time* (1951-66) those that have appeared are: *A Question of Upbringing*, *A Buyer's Market*, *The Acceptance World*, *At Lady Molly's*, *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant*, *The Kindly Ones*, *The Valley of Bones*, *The Soldier's Art*. Powell follows Proust's "stream of consciousness" method. His narrator Nicholas Jenkins records his random impressions as they flow into his consciousness regardless of chronology. The novel is thus a *roman fleuve*, a river novel like Proust's. It covers the period from early 1920s to the middle of Second World War. Jenkins is a sensitive novelist and connoisseur of paintings who is acutely conscious of the complexity of human nature. He attempts to probe the motives behind human action and is especially interested in persons who love power and adventure.

The study comprehends a wide range and variety of characters—aristocrats, businessmen, Bohemians—but its peculiarity is that the impressions of human complexity are conveyed not directly, but by reference to paintings of different periods from Renaissance onwards.

As the work is not yet complete, no definite judgment on it is possible. Tentatively, however, it is safe to say that it is unlikely to be popular. Its 'psychological' interest is too narrow and cannot take the place of action, speed and variety which are the normal fare of a novel. Powell's style is polished and he has a fine sense of comedy.

C.P. Snow is more readable if only because he follows the traditional technique of straightforward and chronological narration. Of course this is not the only recommendation. His field of interest is wide; he offers variety, suspense, excitement—in fact almost everything including character that is desiderated in a novel. Almost, because there is hardly any wit or humour.

The nine volumes constituting his sequence called *Strangers and Brothers* (1940-64) are: *Strangers and Brothers*, *The Conscience of the Rich*, *Time of Hope*, *The Light and the Dark*, *The Masters*, *The New Men*, *Homecomings*, *The Affairs*, *Corridors of Power*.

The narrator is Lewis Eliot of working class origin born about the time of the first World War in a Provincial town (Leicester, Snow's own town). From humble beginnings he works his way up to success at the bar, as Law Professor at Cambridge and as civil servant.

The close correspondence between Eliot's career and Snow's own makes it highly probable that the novel is autobiographical. If not exactly autobiographical, the novel sequence has loud autobiographical overtones. Only two novels, *A Time of Hope* and *Homecomings*, deal directly with Eliot's personal life. The others are each built round some friend or colleague of Eliot's. The best of these is *The Masters* which is about the election of the Master (Principal) of a Cambridge College. The title of the last book in the sequence has passed into daily speech, and as the author himself says, is now become a cliché. *Corridors of Power* deals with 'high politics' of the period 1955-58. The central figure is Roger Quaife who beginning as a Parliamentary Secretary rises through competence and chicane to cabinet rank as Minister of Defence. He is defeated in the Commons on the issue of nuclear weapons and resigns.

Eliot is supposed to be a detached and fair observer, but he makes no secret of his preferences. He idolises Quaife and his attitude to other politicians is that of a respectful lacquey. This may please politicians but not others. Politics and politicians have dirty connotations and we expect a writer so ridicule them rather than hold them up for worship.

The style is staccato, matter of fact, and rather verbose. It is suspiciously the style of a journal or memoir, but not of a Pepys or

Boswell calculated to endear the author to the reader.

Angus Wilson (1913-) a considerable, but overrated, contemporary novelist, is a great favourite with the intellectuals because of the academic learning and the elaborate psychology—Dostoevskian, Freudian and Post-Freudian—that he displays in his novels. To the average reader, his excessive allusiveness and long tags of continental languages—French, German, Italian—are irritating. He seems to have made good use of his opportunities in the British Museum Library where he was employed before he turned to novel writing. One wishes, however, he had used his learning more sparingly. As it is, he does not succeed in transfusing his material into artistic wholes.

In addition to two volumes of short stories, Wilson has published the following novels; *Hemlock and After* (1953), *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (1956), *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot* (1958), *The Old Men at the Zoo* (1961), *Late Call* (1964), and *No Laughing Matter* (1967).

Wilson shows great analytical skill in his characterisation and is particularly happy in his dialogues. His technique in general is traditional nineteenth century, varied by 'flash-backs' of the cinema, long reveries and introspections to link the past with the present (*Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*). He was the first contemporary English novelist to treat the theme of homosexuality on a full scale (*Hemlock and After*). His realism consists in throwing the spotlight on some of the less reputable aspects of contemporary British society, especially its hypocrisy and self-deception. What is pleasing about him is his broadminded acceptance of people who are frank and candid about their weaknesses. He is hard only on the hypocrites and self-deceivers. A writer of strength and vitality, Wilson fills his novels with too many characters with the result that he cannot develop all of them adequately. Because of his desire for subtlety and sophistication, his style is often heavy, involved and awkward.

Hemlock and After. Wilson's first novel, is perhaps the least satisfactory by any standard. Though the theme of homosexuality is treated obliquely and delicately to save our feelings, it proves inadequate even for a short novel of about 250 pages. The homosexual underworld—inhabited by 'queers', 'queens', 'pansies' and 'proteges'—is enveloped in a haze of dark hints, innuendoes and subtle psychology which is mystifying to the uninitiated. Bernard Sands, an ageing novelist, indulges his long-repressed homosexual impulses with tragic results. His wife suffers a serious nervous breakdown and his children are alienated. He himself suffers intensely from the conflict of his double life and loses faith in his pet project of Vardon Hall, a cultural centre for young writers, which he has built up by heroic effort. He dies suddenly from a stroke before resolving the conflict. Of the minor characters the most important is the evil but honey-tongued Mrs. Curity, who runs a brothel under the guise of respectability. She and her associates are brought to book through the energetic action of Mrs. Sand who makes a miraculous recovery.

Anglo-Saxon Attitudes. This is a much better and more representative work of the author. It is concerned primarily with hypocrisy and self-deception and secondarily with homosexuality. There are actually two stories, one public, one private, which are united by the principal character, Gerald Middleton. The public story relates to a historical fraud resulting from a malicious practical joke. In the course of archaeological excavations in 1912 the tomb of a seventh century Bishop is found. Out of hatred for his father Professor Stokesay, Gilbert the youthful Bohemian son, plants a phallic pagan idol in the Bishop's coffin. This deception led to the conclusion that the Bishop was an apostate—a slur on early English Church. Professor Stokesay and another antiquary, Canon Portway, both now dead, had come to know of the fraud, but for fear of compromising the medieval historians had kept quiet.

Gerald Middleton, Professor Emeritus of early medieval history, had known the truth all along, for it had been revealed to him at the time by Gilbert himself (Gilbert was killed in the war of 1914-18), but in spite of his troubled conscience had failed to speak up because of a weak will. Here comes the story of his domestic life. He had ruined his life with his Scandinavian wife Ingeborg by his affair with Gilbert's widow Dollie. Instead of facing facts both husband and wife had kept up a false show of amity and respectability. Their three children had grown up in the shadow of this odd make-believe and had in consequence developed their own quirks. Robin, the eldest son, married, and father of a fine boy, had a mistress. John, a promising public figure, is a homosexual: his infatuation for an Irish juvenile delinquent costs him a leg. Kay, the daughter with a burnt hand, makes an unfortunate marriage and is embittered. They all hate their father, and when he makes a last desperate attempt to conciliate them he succeeds only in alienating them altogether. This climax of his ruined home-life makes him realize the self-deception he has been practising. This truth about himself gives him courage and determination and new hope. He goes and tells the truth about the historical fraud and what is more, he accepts the chairmanship of the Historical Association. He is ready for a fresh start.

The best drawn characters are the frank, unabashed whores Dollie and Elvira, and the delightful working class snob Mrs. Salad. One would have liked to see a little more of that insinuating rogue Yves who is ever willing to oblige great ladies and artists.

Angry Young Men

A new phenomenon appeared in the fifties and early sixties in the shape of a group who came to be called "Angry Young Men" after the title of Osborne's play *Look Back in the Anger* (1956). Besides the playwright, the novelists indentified as the "Angry Young Men" are John Wain (*Hurry on Down*, 1953) Kingsley Amis (*Lucky Jim*, 1954). Allan Sillitoe (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1958), and John Braine (*Room at the Top*, 1962).

These writers express their revolt against "the Establishment" and the accepted values of society on the ground that their elders and their system have made a mess of the world. This is only a sign of immaturity. There have been disasters even before the two World Wars, but nobody ever thought of blaming the world's ills upon any particular section of society. The traditional values of society enshrine the wisdom of the ages, and an attempt to root them out lock, stock and barrel, is fraught with grave peril to the very foundations of human order. Moreover, the angry young men's protest is meaningless inasmuch as no alternative values are suggested to replace them. Mere denial is nihilism, not a remedy.

The post-war reaction was a class reaction against Bloomsbury; a reaction, that is to say, of the working or lower class against the aristocratic, cultured intellectuals who had till then dominated the literary scene. Stephen Spender called it a "rebellion of the lower middle-brows" and observed that "there was an aroma of inferiority about its protest", attributable to the self-conscious provincialism of the writers. These writers show little sense of dedication to literature.

Kingsley Amis (1922-) was until recently a university lecturer. His novels are *Lucky Jim* (1954), *Take a Girl Like You* (1960), *The Anti-Death League* (1966), *The Green Man* (1969). His gift of fun and satire is best displayed in *Lucky Jim*, his most popular novel. Jim Dixon, a blunt Northerner, is a university lecturer in History. He finds his job a sheer humbug and gives it up. He wins the girl of his dreams after beating up his rival, Bertrand, the hypocritical artist son of his elderly and incompetent Professor. Jim may be lucky, but one feels he is only a lucky lout. The other novels are not so successful. *Anti-Death League*, for example, purports to be a war story of Vietnam, but it is really compact of drink, sex, and obscenity. A British army unit is charged with the execution of Operation Apollo whose aim is to spread hydrophobia in the Chinese lines. The Operation is called off at the last minute. Against this background develops the love affair between Captain James Churchill and Mrs. Catherine Casement, a widow with lesbian tendencies, which are traced to sexual frustration. Her cure by this affair is furthered by Lady Hazell, a rich widow and regular whore whose salon is open to army officers at all hours. There is also a lot of clinical discussion of homosexuality. The frequent use of the four-letter word by Catherine is disgusting.

P.S. Since the above was written the author has added another feather to his pornographic cap by *Girl 20*, his latest novel (1972). Sir Roy Vandervane, a music composer, leaves his second wife for Sylvia, a sophisticated girl of 17. When his outraged wife comes to see her and makes a scene crying "What could any man of the remotest intelligence or taste or discrimination see in you?", Sylvia's answer is instantly to strip naked.

In the words of a reviewer this is the author's "best book for some years" (*Encounter*, January 1972). *O tempora! O mores!*

John Braine (1922-) was a librarian until the publication in

1957 of *Room at the Top* which proved a huge success. Until 1965 the novel had achieved thirteen impressions. It reeks with sex; hence its popularity—a sad commentary on our increasingly permissive age. Its sequel *Life at the Top* was published in 1962.

Room at the Top. Joe Lampton, a young man of poor working class origin, leaves his humble surroundings, and becomes municipal accountant of Warley, a flourishing industrial town in Yorkshire. His one ambition in life is to achieve money and power. Handsome, tough and intelligent, he attracts many women and forms a liaison with Alice, a married woman much older than himself. Though this relationship is very satisfying to both, Lampton with his eye ever fixed on the main chance contrives to attract Susan 19, the beautiful daughter of a commercial magnate. He gives up Alice, seduces Susan and then marries her. Alice becomes distraught and commits suicide. Lampton makes a great show of grief and remorse, and consols himself with drink and a pick-up girl. A thoroughly nauseating book.

John Wain (1925-), formerly a lecturer at Reading University, is an important and active figure in the literary world. He first attracted attention as an angry young man by his novel *Hurrying On Down* (1953). His latest is *A Winter in the Hills* (1970). His other novels are *The Contenders*, *A Travelling Woman*, *Strike the Father Dead*, *The Young Visitors*, *The Smaller Sky*. Besides, there are two volumes of short stories. Wain is also a poet and literary critic.

Hurrying on Down. Charles Lumley, a university graduate, is so disgusted with bourgeois life that he takes odd manual, even menial, jobs, refusing to settle down to a life of a comfort in a job suited to his education.

A Winter in the Hills. Roger Furnival, 40, a London philologist, goes to North Wales to acquire proficiency in Welsh and thus add to his qualifications so that he can get a better job. He gets involved in a furious feud of transport operators. Dic Sharp has bought up all small bus operators except Gareth who puts up strong resistance. Roger comes to his aid by offering to act, unpaid, as his conductor. He foils all Dic's evil schemes of victimisation against Gareth, including a murderous assault by his thugs. Tipped off by his agents in the Transport Board on the impending nationalisation of transport services Dic auctions off all his buses, so that all the ousted bus-men get back their buses cheap. They celebrate this victory over Dic by joining in the festivities that are being held on the occasion of a Colloquium of Celtic poets. Dic and the economists think the bus operators are fools to celebrate for they have gained only a year's respite before being swallowed by the Government. But Roger justifies the celebration on the ground that the bus-men's life is a continual battle for survival and every episode in that battle has its importance as victory or defeat. The Government's viewpoint is impersonal.

A great part of the book is filled with the sexual adventures of the

hero in language that does little credit to the author. He ends his winter in the hills by carrying off a former colleague's wife and two unearned children.

Alan Sillitoe (1928-) before becoming a novelist worked in the Raleigh bicycle factory in Nottingham. Of all the so-called Angry Young Men he is the most violent in his protest against "the Establishment". His first and best known novel *Saturday Evening and Sunday Morning* (1958) voices this protest through the hero Arthur Seaton, a belligerent worker in a Nottingham bicycle factory. He finds his lot so hard that in his fury he hints at a working class revolution against "the Establishment". Apart from this, he finds relaxation in fishing and country walks with his girl friend. The novel is marred by excess of sex, violence, and obscenity.

His next work was a volume of short stories containing the well-known novelette *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* which provides the title (1959). This suggests a relentless war against authority. A Borstal boy deliberately loses the long distance run just to revenge himself upon the prison governor. He repudiates the accepted loyalty in favour of loyalty to his class. At the end of the story he is planning a bigger robbery than the one which had landed him in prison.

Sillitoe's other novels are: *The General* (1960), *The Death of William Posters* (1965), *A Tree on Fire* (1967), *A Start in Life* (1971).

American Protesters

Curiously enough the revolt against "the Establishment" and the materialistic values of "the Affluent Society" has taken quite a different form in the USA. While the Beatles, John Lennon and his group, have amassed fortunes by pop music, and have only flirted with the "transcendental" meditation of Mahesh Yogi in this country, their American counterparts, "Beats", or "Hippies" have taken to a life of drift, drugs, and "dharma". Swarms of them have descended upon Delhi. Ill-clad or half-clad, with long hair and beards they may be seen lazing in the parks or drifting aimlessly in Connaught Circus. Some of them study *Geetu* and tell beads.

The chief exponents of their protest are Jack Kerouac and J.D. Salinger. The former's *The Dharma Bums* sums up the Hippies' philosophy—renunciation and contemplation. The latter in *Catcher in the Rye* depicts the innocence of childhood—a plea to solve the world's problems through love.

David Storey (1933-) another novelist of working class life won great popularity with his *This Sporting Life* (1960). Trained as an artist he took up several jobs—foot-baller, teacher, tent erector etc.—before turning to writing. He shows great insight into the complex emotions of his characters in *Flight into Camden* (1960). Margaret, a miner's daughter, runs away with Haworth, a married man. The father comes to London to take her away. They meet; Margaret yearns for her father—but she doesn't go with him. A painfully realistic picture.

Women Novelists

The second and third quarters of the century are crowded with women novelists. The more important of them are survivors from an older generation: Rose Macaulay, Rebecca West, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Elizabeth Bowen and Rosamond Lehmann. Of the younger generation the notables are: Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing. The older contemporaries are by and large, traditional; the younger, as might be expected, are modern and aggressive.

Rose Macaulay (1881-1958) burst into news in the first quarter of the century with her *Potterism* (1920) and *Told by an Idiot* (1923). *Potterism* (from Mr. and Mrs. Potter of the novel) was her coinage for philistinism. These two novels showed her as a ruthless and unrestrained social satirist. Her later novels are: *Staying with Relations* (1930), *They were Defeated*, *The World My Wilderness* (1950), *The Towers of Trebizond* (1956). *They were Defeated* is a historical novel of the 17th century depicting the poets Milton, Marvell, Herrick, etc. *The World My Wilderness* depicts war-time London. *The Towers of Trebizond*, to some extent autobiographical, is rated by many as her best.

Rebecca West (1892-) novelist, critic and journalist, has been honoured with D.B.E. Her style, highly individual and intense, is complicated by psycho-analytical preoccupation. Her novels are: *The Judge* (1922), *The Fountain Overflows* (1957), *The Birds Fall Down* (1967). As a critic she wields a very caustic pen.

Ivy Compton-Burnett (1892-1971), the most accomplished among contemporary women novelists, owes her strength to deliberate restriction of range. She describes mostly in dialogue the crowded upper middle-class Victorian households at the turn of the century. The contrast between their stiff and formal exterior and their hidden low impulses produces shocking results. There are murders, adultery, incest, etc. as in a Greek tragedy. What is most striking is that such themes are treated in a formal, decorous style reminiscent of Jane Austen who, however, would never have touched such themes. Miss Burnett has written nearly two dozen novels, the most outstanding being *Pastors and Masters* (1925), *A Family and a Fortune* (1939), *The Mighty and Their Fall* (1963).

Miss Burnett's posthumous novel: *The Last and the First* (1971) is a grim tale of sex, violence, murder, etc. It is 'mixture as before' and in the same distinguished style.

Elizabeth Bowen (1899-) also shows the influence of Jane Austen in the restraint and delicacy of her style. She is particularly good at descriptions of places, as in her *Heat of the Day* (1949), a love story set in wartime London of the 40s. *The Death of the Heart* (1938) and *The Little Girls* (1964) describe the mature woman's nostalgia for the innocence of girlhood. Her earlier novels include *To the North* (1932), *The House in Paris* (1935).

Rosamond Lehmann (1903-). In her *Echoing Grove* (1953) she

advances the interesting theory that human beings are sexual mixtures. Man is not entirely male nor woman entirely female; each has something of the other. According to this theory much of the tension in male-female relationship is due to unawareness of this fact.

Doris Lessing (1913-), a Rhodesian by birth, emigrated to England after the second World War. She is a crusading novelist devoted to two causes: the coloured of Africa and women's subjection in a man's world. An accomplished writer, she is quite objective in her treatment of the colour problem, though far less so in respect of women's problem. She thinks communism alone could solve the problems.

Children of Violence is the title of a tetralogy whose constituent novels are *Martha Quest* (1952), *A Proper Marriage* (1954), *A Ripple from the Storm* (1958), and *Landlocked* (1965). In her passionate concern with questions of morality Lessing is reminiscent of George Eliot.

The Golden Notebook (1962). The heroine Anna is a novelist who fills four notebooks with her observations and reflections, but fails to weld them into an artistic whole. She is, or rather has been, a communist and regards herself as a "free woman". She blames her sexual frustrations on men's impotence. Though a divorcee she looks forward to a second marriage. Lessing's first novel *The Grass is Singing* (1950) is about a white agriculturist family in South Africa.

Muriel Spark (1918-) a versatile and prolific writer has produced poems, plays, short stories as well as novels. Besides, she is a critic and edits two poetry magazines. Her novels are: *Robinson* (1958), *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Comforters*, *The Bachelors*, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965).

It is quite apparent that Mrs. Spark hasn't wind enough for full-length novels. *The Mandelbaum Gate*, the only one of requisite length is unconvincing. She is too intellectual and too self-conscious to succeed as a popular novelist. Twists of technique that she attempts do not improve her readability. *The Girls of Slender Means* is a good example. We are shown a slice of London life in 1945 just after the Allied victory over Germany. It is like a twice told tale. The pattern of life in a Girls' hostel called the May of Teck Club—the girls' habits and occupations, their men-friends, parties and affairs—there is nothing in all this which is novel or exciting. Even the arrival of Nicholas Farrington, the poet with his simulated anarchism, is no great event, though the writer makes an unsuccessful attempt to make much of it. The technique of announcing the anarchist's martyrdom in Haiti right at the beginning and relating the whole story of his exploits with Selina on the roof as a flash-back is simply clumsy.

The only interesting episode is that of the milling crowd assembled at night to see the Royal family on the balcony of the Palace. In the crush "many strange arms were twined round strange bodies."

Out of these accidental embraces "many liaisons, some permanent, were formed" which resulted in the birth of numerous children "of experimental variety" "or nine months after".

For the rest, the novelette is diffuse, desultory, aimless. It is padded with snatches of poetry, bits of religion (Mrs. Spark is a Catholic), publisher's tricks to beat down the authors, and the like. In fact the author has nothing important to say.

Iris Murdoch (1919-) is a tutor in Philosophy at Oxford and married to John Bailey, don and novelist. She is a popular novelist, but her work is unequal. She has published the following novels: *Under the Net* (1955), *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), *The Sandcastle* (1957), *The Bell* (1958), *A Time of Angels* (1966), *The Nice and the Good* (1968). The theme central to all her novels is selflessness. Her attempts at symbolism are not always successful. One feels she has not yet succeeded in integrating her material into artistic unity.

The Sandcastle deals with the moral problem created by a broken marriage. William Mor, a middle-aged school-master, is bored with his domineering wife Nan and falls in love with Rain Carter a very young woman from France who is painting the portrait of Demoyte, the retired Headmaster of St. Bride's School. Nan suddenly comes upon the lovers locked in embrace in the drawing room. Miss Carter has not technically become Mor's mistress, and Nan is willing to forgive and forget if Mor gives her up. Mor is not willing to do this, but at the same time he hasn't the courage to leave Nan and their two teenage children. This dilemma is solved for him by Carter who understands the situation and leaves for France. Mor is left with no alternative but to reconcile himself to *status quo ante*.

The problem for Mor, it may seem, is unresolved. But it is resolved in the only way possible—the way pointed out to him by his colleague Bledyard. Real freedom, he points out, is not personal satisfaction but complete forgetfulness of self in your concern for others: "Make yourself nothing in your awareness of them." (Chap. 13). In fact this is exactly what Mor himself has said earlier at a public meeting (Chap. 4).

The symbolism of the gipsy appearing and disappearing twice as a warning—first in the wood when Mor and Rain are falling in love and again when they are embracing in the drawing room—does not relate properly to the story and is a total failure.

The New Woman. Doris Lessing is comparatively a mild crusader in the cause of the "free woman". A more violent assault on man's citadel has been made by the American Kate Millett, the most militant leader of the movement known as "Women's Lib." Her *Sexual Politics* (1971), a sort of manifesto of the movement for women's emancipation, is a disturbing example of the length to which the female rebels can go. Another of the same brand is Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1971). Whether formally linked with this movement or not some British women novelists—Edna O'Brien, Bright Brophy, Penelope Mortimer and others—have

pleaded the cause of the 'free woman' with a fervour which is nothing short of revolutionary. They denounce man as sexually demanding though half-impotent. By a curious logic, however, some of these novelists have reversed the male-female relationship by giving the role of Don Juan to woman.

Other women novelists have been content, for the most part, to follow traditional forms. Prominent among them are Elizabeth Jane Howard, Storm Jameson, Lettice Cooper, Stella Gibbons (*Cold Comfort farm*), Nancy Mitford.

Historical Novels

No great historical novels have been produced in England in the present century and this in spite of the fact that two great wars have convulsed the world. So the reason is not lack of history, but its nearness to us. A period to be historical must be remote. The two wars have not yet passed into the mists of history. Imagination has no scope in the absolutely known. A historical novel is not simply resurrection of the past but also its imaginative presentation. The problem of the historical novelist is the delicate balancing of fact with fiction.

Two outstanding historical novels of the 20th century are: *Gone with the Wind* (1936) by Margaret Mitchell (1900-49), a superb recreation of the American Civil War, and *I, Claudius* (1934) by Robert Graves (1895—) in which Augustus Caesar and his successors including Claudius live again. Others of interest are: Koestler's *The Gladiators* (1939); Helen Waddell's (1889—) *Peter Abelard* (1933), the tragic love story of Abelard and Heloise against its 12th century background; Katherine Winsor's *Forever Amber*, over-sexy portrayal of the Restoration period; Baroness Orczy's fantastic stories of the *Scarlet Pimpernel* and Georgette Heyer's fanciful Georgian series.

CHAPTER 53

THE NOVEL: MISCELLANEOUS

Detective Fiction: Conan Doyle, Chesterton, Bentley, Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christie—Science fiction—Short story—American and Foreign novelists.

Some priggish people regard detective fiction as 'low'. This is plain silly. To condemn it as escapist is to condemn all imaginative writing. A good detective story can be as absorbing, thrilling and satisfying as any good novel, even if it has no pattern of social meaning. As a relaxation from the busy man's dreary routine a detective novel offers as good a diversion as any other pastime, if not better.

Though Wilkie Collins was the first English writer to produce this kind of novel (*Moonstone*, *Woman in White*), its real publicity began with the publication in 1891 of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. It was followed by *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894) and several others. Some later stories of detection have shown greater literary merit and greater ingenuity of plot, but they have not dislodged *Sherlock Holmes* from its position of pre-eminence. The secret lies in the character of the detective—in his charming eccentricities and mannerisms. The stupid Dr. Watson, his assistant, serves as foil to set off his cleverness. "It is elementary, my dear Watson."

Conan Doyle was himself a qualified doctor, but the character of Sherlock Holmes is based on the eminent Edinburgh surgeon Joseph Bell. The detective is a classic creation. Thousands of his fans visit Baker Street to see the place he is supposed to have lived in.

The flow of Sherlock Holmes stories eventually stopped, but under the pressing demand of the reading public Conan Doyle had to resurrect the detective whose further adventures in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905) and many other volumes continued to entertain his admirers upto 1927.

Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was a prolific writer. He wrote a large number of historical and other romances including *The White Company* and *Rodney Stone*.

The form was taken up by G.K. Chesterton in *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911) and *The Wisdom of Father Brown*. Father Brown is a Roman Catholic priest who detects crime by intuition. Chesterton gave a religious bias to crime detection. Crime is regarded as sin and not merely as a puzzle to be solved. Besides these crime stories, Chesterton wrote other novels and stories including *Napoleon of Notting Hill*, *The Man who was Thursday*, and *The Flying Inn*.

E.C. Bentley in *Trent's Last Case* (1913) gave detective fiction a new turn in the direction of plot contrivance which has been followed by all subsequent practitioners of the form.

The literary merit of Bentley has tempted several scholars and academics to try their hand at this class of fiction. As if afraid of open avowal they have written under pseudonyms: C. Day Lewis as Nicholas Blake, J.M. Stewart as Michael Innes, Robert Montgomery as Edmus Crispin.

The list would be incomplete without mentioning three writers who have enjoyed enormous popularity in this line: Edger Wallace, Ian Fleming, and Erle Stanley Gardner.

Edgar Wallace (1875—1932), perhaps the greatest thriller writer of his time, also wrote plays which had long runs on the London stage. Of his numerous crime novels *The Four Just Men* (1905), his first, is also the best. A close second is *Sanders of the River* (1911) set in Africa.

Ian Fleming (1908-64) who was personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence during the Second World War is famous for his spy stories, especially the 'James Bond' series. The American Erle Stanley Gardner is known as the creator of Perry Mason, the clever and daring criminal lawyer. He died only recently.

John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir (1875-1940) a versatile writer on history, travel, biography, religion, etc. deserves honourable mention here for his stories of adventure and secret diplomatic intrigues such as *Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) and *Greenmantle* (1916). He was governor of Canada. His autobiography *Memory Hold the Door* appeared in 1940.

Women Writers of Detective Fiction

A remarkable feature of our age is the prominence of women in the field of detective writing. The important names are: Dorothy Sayers, Agatha Christie, Marjorie Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, Elizabeth Mackintosh (Josephine Tey), Patricia Moyes.

Agatha Christie and Ngaio Marsh have both been honoured with D.B.E. It's a pity that Dorothy Sayers, the most accomplished of them all and Marjorie Allingham died unhonoured. Dorothy Sayers raised the detective novel to a new level of excellence by her all-round scholarship, wit, humour and characterisation. Like Chesterton she added a note of seriousness to her novels by her religious sense. Her detective hero Lord Peter Wimsey is a memorable creation.

In America too women are equally prominent in this line. Among the well-known names are Emma Lather, Elizabeth Lynington, Charlotte Armstrong, Ursula Curtis.

Science Fiction

Though much science fiction has been written since H.G. Wells, it has produced little that has literary merit. Two notable exceptions are Nevil Shute (1899—) and John Wyndham (1903—).

Nevil Shute displays expert knowledge of aeronautical engineering in *Round the Bend* (1951) and *No Highway*. In the latter he advances the theory, now considered prophetic, that structural failure in aircraft is caused by metallic fatigue. His *Chequer Board* (1947) and *A Town Like Alice* are stories of wartime heroism.

John Wyndham's improbable scientific fantasies of the future are contained in *The Day of the Triffids* (1960) which describes lethal plants which uproot themselves and walk.

The Kraken Wakes in which under-water missile stations are set up by beings from another planet.

Trouble with Lichen in which lichen is discovered which prolongs life indefinitely.

Chrysalids (1955) the best, which deals with a new world some hundreds of years after an atomic holocaust. The fall-out has resulted in strange mutations in man, animal and plant. The new race of men has a horror of physical and mental deviation analogous to that which their ancestors had of religious deviation. Some youngsters who have powers of telepathy are persecuted and forced to flee to outlying regions. A girl born with six toes keeps her 'deformity' a secret to escape the wrath of the populace.

The Short Story

Thousands of short stories have been written in the present century, but most of them remain buried in the pages of magazines and weeklies. Writers who have achieved special distinction in this line are Katherine Mansfield in the earlier period and V.S. Pritchett and H.E. Bates (1905—) in the later. Great novelists have not disdained this humbler, though by no means easier, form. The names of Galsworthy, D.H. Lawrence, and Somerset Maugham will readily occur to the mind. Indeed, Maugham's short stories (3 Vols.) are far more interesting than his novels.

AMERICAN AND OTHER FOREIGN NOVELISTS

American

John Doss Passos (1896-). His trilogy *U.S.A.* (1937) comprising *The 42nd Parallel*, *Nineteen-Nineteen* and *The Big Money* gives a panoramic and satiric view of American life from 1900 to 1930. His

novels are *Three Soldiers* (1921), *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), *Number One* (1943), *Chosen Country* (1951).

William Faulkner (1897-1965), winner of Nobel Prize in 1950, will be remembered principally by two novels *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930). His general themes are the decay of old aristocratic families, the narrowness of "poor whites" and the conflict of black and white. His chosen region is deep south. His other novels are: *Pylon* (1935), *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), and the trilogy comprising *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*. In spite of his massiveness and brilliance, Faulkner's idiom and highly complex style are a great obstacle to the non-American reader.

Ernest Hemingway (1898-1961) was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1954. His most celebrated novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) is a love story set in World War I. It is considered by some the finest American novel of that war. Written in telegraphic English it is cynical and vulgar. If this mixture constitutes fineness, the praise is well deserved. The only words that ring in your ears after you have closed the book are "Come to bed, Come to bed". His best performance is really *The Old Man and the Sea* which describes an old man's successful struggle in landing a monster of a fish. This novel is true to his genius, for he was fond of out-door life, manly sports and adventure. His first novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) voices the dis-illusionment of Americans in Europe after the first World War. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) is a love story set against the background of Spanish Civil War. It is an indictment of fascism. In his last days, he suffered from persecution mania and committed suicide.

John Steinbeck (1902-69) will be long remembered for the vivid pictures of the sufferings of poor farmers and ranch labourers resulting from mechanisation of agriculture (tractors, etc.) in *Grapes of Wrath* (1934) and *Of Mice and Men* (1937). His other novels include *Tortilla Flat*, *Canary Row* (1944) and *The Winter of our Discontent* (1961).

Ralph Ellison (1914-) is an American negro. His only novel *The Invisible Man* (1952) is reminiscent of Dostoevsky and Kafka. It is too intense and individual to have universal appeal. The hero is invisible and lives in a cellar, hiding himself from people who when they look at him see nothing but projections of their imaginations. Fleeing from a terrifying race riot in Harlem he has taken refuge in a cellar. In a hospital he is used as a guinea pig and subjected to cruel experiments. There is even talk of castrating him. Like scientists and demagogues he too has been blind, but with gradual enlightenment he has begun to understand himself and others better. The moral is that colour prejudice is due to man's failure to recognise the glorious diversity of nature.

Saul Bellow (1915-) and Bernard Malamud (1914-) represent the best in Jewish American fiction. The common theme of all Jewish novelists of America is a plea for integration into American society, so different in outlook, tastes and values from their own. Saul

Bellow is refreshingly optimistic and his novels, enriched with scholarships have given him an authoritative position in the world of fiction. Indifferent to questions of form, he concentrates on the thesis that despite the strains and stresses of modern society, a fruitful and satisfying human life is still possible only if we recognise the brotherhood of man. An exuberant writer, he is rich in humour and vigorous in his command of the vernacular. His novels are: *Dangling Man* (1944), *The Victim* (1947), *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Seize the Day* (1956), *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1964). Malamud, less exuberant, is a lesser Bellow. He has published the following novels: *The Natural* (1952), *The Assistant* (1957), *A New Life* (1961), *The Fixer* (1966).

James Baldwin (1924-), the most brilliant of Negro novelists, inculcates the same lesson as his compatriot Ellison. Loving others is the only solution to the problems of American life—its ugliness and brutality. The whites who exploit the blacks destroy not only their victims but also themselves. Loving others is possible only if we frankly accept the truth about ourselves. If we accept, for example, our sexual nature, whether homosexual or heterosexual, our acceptance and toleration of others would be so much the easier. Similarly, if the blacks and whites—especially the whites—accepted their own weaknesses, the conflict between the two would disappear.

In *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1954) which presents the colour problem, the conflict is not between black and white, but between two opposite attitudes of the black community to the white—the older attitude of accepting the injustice and newer one of fighting it. Much of the power of this novel derives from the sympathetic understanding displayed in the author's attitude towards the whites. *Giovanni's Room* (1956) with a Paris setting is a tragic story of homosexual relationship. *Another Country* (1962) depicts the bohemian life of a mixed racial group of Greenwich Village artists and intellectuals—whites and blacks, homosexuals and heterosexuals. The author's attitude to homosexuality is one of approval. There is nothing wrong with the people. It is society's categorisation of them into black and white, homosexual and heterosexual, etc. that is evil. The rottenness of New York life is reflected in the vulgar and obscene language of the characters.

Vladimir Nabokov (1899-) is a Russian settled in America. His daringly sexy novel *Lolita* (1959) is a great favourite with readers of pornography. His use of the English language is equally daring. The hero Humbert fancies a special kind of girl whom he calls 'nymphet'. He speaks of "a quick connection before dinner" as breezily as one might speak of "a quick one".

Norman Mailer (1923-) became famous for his naturalistic war novel *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). This is an authentic account of the lives of American forces in the Pacific islands in World War II. Apart from the grim realities of war—death, brutality and sex—which the novel graphically depicts, its striking feature is the naked

and obscene language indulged in by G.I.s. His next novel *The Barbary Shore* (a sequel to the first) in which he attempted the Kafka technique was a flop. *An American Dream* is simply disgusting, crammed as it with horrific scenes of death, violence and sex in their extreme forms. The difficulty with Mailer is that he does not stick to one form. Besides, most of his energy is spent in self-advertisement so that little is left for sustained, disciplined work.

Other noted 20th century American novelists are listed below along with their well-known novels.

Owen Wister (1860-1938): *The Virginians* (1902), the best of 'Westerns'.

Edith Wharton (1862-1927): *The Age of Innocence* (1920).

Booth Tarkington (1869-1946): *Alice Adams* (1921).

Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945): *An American Tragedy* (1925).

Jack London (1876-1916): *The Sea Wolf*, the most exciting of his animal stories.

Upton Sinclair (1878-): *Oil* (1927).

Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951): *Babbitt* (1922), satiric portrait of an American go-getter. A Nobel Prize Winner.

Pearl Buck (1892-): *The Good Earth* (1931), *Sons* (1932), about a Chinese farmer and his family.

Katherine Anne Porter (1894-): *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1949), *Old Mortality*, *Noon Wine*.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940): *The Great Gatsby* (1925), satire on wealthy American society in the 1920s; *Tender is the Night* (1934), about the "lost generation".

Thornton Wilder (1887-): *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), an inspiring novel set in Peru, *The Woman of Andros*, *The Ides of March* (1948).

James Gould Cozzens (1903-): *Guard of Honour* (1948), an exciting story of World War II.

Robert Penn Warren (1905-): *All the King's Men* (1947).

William Saroyan (1908-): *The Human Comedy* (1943).

Irwin Shaw (1913-): *The Troubled Air* (1951), *The Young Lions* (1948), a great story of World War II.

James Jones (1921-): *From Here to Eternity* (1951), about army life in Hawaii, just before Pearl Harbour.

South African

There are two distinguished names: William Plomer and Nadine Gordimer. William Plomer, the pioneer, was the first to advocate the mixing of black and white (negritude) in *Turbot Wolfe* (1926). His subsequent novels have other settings and subjects: *Sado* is set in

Japan; *The Case is Altered* and *The Invaders* deal with England of the 1930s; *Museum Pieces* (1952) is about the difficult problem of the older generation—the museum pieces—adapting themselves to the changed world.

Nadine Gordimer (1923-) has produced several volumes of short stories and four or five novels. Of the latter, *World of Strangers* and *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966) are remarkable for their outspoken condemnation of the South African regime. It is not surprising that her books are banned in her own country. Her short stories are better than her novels for which she seems to lack the requisite stamina.

Indian

Of the Indian writers in English (called Indo-Anglians) the important ones are:

R.K. Narayan (1907-) has won wide esteem as the author of *The Guide*. His other novels are *The English Teacher* and *The Moneater of Malgudi*. A writer in the naturalistic style he has humour, fantasy and pathos.

Raja Rao (1909-) analyses the Indian mind in *The Serpent and the Rope*. A sprinkling of Sanskrit words is no handicap to Indian readers.

Khushwant Singh (1915-) in *I shall not hear the Nightingales* depicts the life of a Sikh community in 1942-43. The style is a mixture of harshness and poetry.

Balchandra Rajan (1920-) is a very promising writer. He is remarkable for his restrained humour and compassion. His novels: *The Dark Dancer* and *Too Long in the West*.

V.S. Naipaul (1932-) who is of Indian parents settled in Trinidad bids fair to occupy the topmost position among the newer Indian writers. He has won three British prizes to date: Rhys Memorial prize for his first novel *Mystic Masseur* (1957), W.H. Smith Library Award for *The Mimic Men*, and £5000 Booker Prize (1971) for being the best writer after the publication of his latest novel *In a Free State*. His other novels are: *Mr. Stone and the Knight's Companion*, *Miguel Street*, *A House for Mr. Biswas*, *An Area of Darkness*. The last name, an account of the author's journey to his ancestral village in this country, did not please Indian readers principally because of its lack of sentiment for the mother-country.

All Naipaul's novels have an element of comedy, but his later work has become increasingly serious. Though most of his stories have a Caribbean setting, his themes have universal interest and significance.

The Mystic Masseur. A comic novel of colonial politics, it shows how the insignificant Ganesh Ramswamair rises to greatness as G. Ramsey Muir M.B.E. It is risky to give examples, but many Indian readers must have seen such metamorphoses (minus perhaps the title) in India during the British regime.

A House for Mr. Biswas will be keenly appreciated in this country where many a son-in-law is tempted or forced by circumstances to live with his in-laws. It is an unenviable life and the novel gives a graphic account of Mr. Biswas's struggles to live independently in a house of his own. He succeeds at last.

Mr. Stone and the Knight's Companion should relieve the depression of those who have retired or are about to retire. Mr. Stone, filled with gloom at the prospect of retirement, conceives a scheme for pensioners to visit the sick and disabled. This gives him new hope and zest.

The Mimic Men. An exiled Caribbean politician narrates the events of his life suggesting that his is a typical case of all colonial politicians. Thrust into positions of power and having no experience or tradition of government, they make a mess of the administration, and become 'mimic men'.

Summing Up

The contemporary English novel—say after 1930—is, by and large, narrow in canvas, shallow in its reading of life, and decadent in its moral and social outlook. Because of the importance given to individual consciousness by Bergson, James and Freud, creative genius has given place to analytical intellect. Excessive attention to psychological analysis has narrowed the range of the novel, restricting it to one or two characters. We miss in it the full-blooded social life of the Victorian and early 20th century novel. Whatever else a novel might be, it is first and last a story. The story interest of the modern novel is meagre.

The shallowness of the contemporary novel is attributable largely to French and Russian theories of realism and naturalism. Reaction against romance and idealism has led to the novel becoming a drain inspector's report. The naturalistic technique has come to mean photographic reproduction of life's ugliness and brutality. As the brighter aspects of life—its beauty and joy—are ignored, the result is a mood of pessimism and despair.

The low moral tone of the contemporary novel stems as much from the theories of naturalism as from loss of faith. The Victorian novelists and their followers of the early 20th century were great because they were men of faith. They believed in something higher than themselves, be it Christian religion, Western culture or progress. In any case they believed in a set of human values which they shared with their readers. Their novels had a social purpose. The modern novelist (with a few exceptions) has no such faith. In fact, he does not believe in anything and has no social purpose to serve. (What social purpose, for instance, is served by *Room at The Top*, *The Death of William Posters*, or *The American Dream*?). He cannot see beyond his nose. A drift in a spiritual vacuum he substitutes for social purpose his own pet fancy or preoccupation. Since he cannot be good or great, he settles for smartness, sophistication. This smart-

ness is manifested in his rejection of what are dubbed "bourgeois values". He revels in sex and violence. Pornography pays dividends. Portraying the manners and morals of a decadent society he himself becomes decadent.

The irony of the situation is that some of the trashy novels of today are boosted as modern classics, when in actual fact they are only "tracts for the times". They are ephemeral and are soon forgotten. Indeed, some magazines have more lasting quality than these so-called classics. This is the strongest indictment of the ruling aesthetic philosophy that regards naturalism as the highest art. No great art can flourish on the homeopathic principle of "cure of similars by similars". Art, as Aristotle said, does not represent things as they are, but as they might or ought to be. The greatness of the two romantic ages is proof of this. The writer must be dedicated to an ideal, an aspiration for that which is highest and best and eternal in human values. The fashionable prejudice against "bourgeois values" is the bane of all forms of writing including the novel. It is forgotten that it is the bourgeoisie, the middle classes who have valued literature most and who have sustained literary values by their financial stability and life-modes.

No one can predict the future of the English novel. No great figure has yet appeared on the scene. Hopeful signs are, however, discernible in three non-British writers: Saul Bellow, Patrick White, and V.S. Naipaul. The great novelist of the future must be a man of comprehensive and steady vision. While accepting the harsh realities of our day, he should not allow his vision to be blurred by them. It is only thus that he can make a constructive response not only to contemporary problems but to the timeless, eternal problems of human existence.

CHAPTER 54

GENERAL PROSE

The 'critical' trend of the Personal Essay--The Essayists: Beerbohm, Lucas, Lynd, Milne, Gardiner, Chesterton, Belloc, Priestley--Criticism: prolific but shallow due to 'popularisation' of literature--Selected critical works--The New Criticism: Eliot, Richards, Leavis--Biography: new fashion of "debunking" started by Strachey; others--Autobiography: its difficulty--Gissing, Moore, Lady Asquith, Sassoon, Osbert Sitwell, Churchill--Travel books: *Far Away and Long Ago*, *Path to Rome*--History: Toynbee, Churchill, Trevelyan, Fisher--Philosophy: "The linguistic movement" and its influence on literary criticism; repudiation of metaphysics and ethics by Russell Moore, Wittgenstein.

The Essay

The literary or personal Essay has continued to flourish in the present century, though since the 40s its personal character has been obscured by the 'critical', and it survives today as an extended book-review of more or less enduring interest. The greatest names among the essayist are: Sir Max Beerbohm, E.V. Lucas, Robert Lynd, A.A. Milne, A.G. Gardiner, G.K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, J.B. Priestley.

Sir Max Beerbohm (1872-1956) the brilliant dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review* for a dozen years (1898-1910) was a master of irony and satire. These he directed against literary mannerisms and social pretences. An Oxford man, he scored his first success with his delightful fantasia *Zuleika Dobson or an Oxford Love Story* (1911) in which a beautiful adventuress inspires the youth of Oxford with hopeless passion. College campuses and lecture halls are deserted. Having flattened Oxford she leaves by special train for Cambridge. In *Christmas Garland* (1912) he parodies his contemporaries: Benson, Wells, Conard, Bennett, Shaw, etc. His first book of essays characteristically entitled *The Works of Max Beerbohm* appeared in 1896. This was followed by *Moore* (1899), *Yet Again* (1909) and *Even Now* (1920). The sketches of Swinburne and Watts-Dunton in No. 2 "The Pines" of *Even Now* are wholly delightful. Beerbohm was also an accomplished cartoonist. Highly esteemed as a born and original humorist he was knighted in 1939.

E.V. Lucas (1868-1938), sometime assistant editor of *Punch*, has

been generally regarded as the true successor of Lamb. He wrote, among numerous works, a standard life of Charles Lamb and edited the works and letters of Charles and Marry Lamb. His volumes of essays are *Character and Comedy* (1907), *One day and Another* (1909) and *A Loiterer's Harvest* (1913). Besides these there are two charming anthologies *The Open Road* and *The Friendly Town* as well as a number of discursive 'entertainments' like *Over Bemerton's* (1908) and *Listener's Lute* (1911) which are a blend of novel and essay.

Robert Lynd (1879-1956), scholar and critic, was an essayist of exceptional charm deriving from his wit and wisdom and above all, from his unaffected simplicity of style. His best is contained in *The Pleasure of Ignorance* (1921) and *Essays on Life and Literature* (1951). As 'Y Y' he was for sometime editor of 'John O' London.'

A.A. Milne (1882-1926) a noted humorist was assistant editor (1906-14) of *Punch*. His delightful vein of humour is expressed in essays, stories, verse and plays.

A.G. Gardiner (1865-1946), 'Alpha of the Plough', figures prominently in school anthologies. He delights by the lightness of his touch. His collections include *Prophets, Priests and Kings* (1908), *Pillars of Society* (1912) and *Pebbles on the Shore* (1917).

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936) and Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) were both prolific and versatile writers. Both were Catholics and shared common interests and convictions. Close friends and frequent collaborators they were regarded as inseparable and known as 'Chesterbelloc'. As an essayist Chesterton was generally fantastic but nevertheless genuinely thoughtful. His excessive use of paradox is apt to be tiresome, but he is always enjoyable. The best of his essay books include *All Things Considered* (1908), *Tremendous Trifles* (1909), *A Defence of Nonsense* (1911), *A Miscellany of Men* (1912). Belloc's essays are more ingenious and also more restrained in their humour. His essay collections are *On Nothing, On Something, On Everything*, etc.

J.B. Priestley (1894-), famous as novelist and critic, is also an excellent essayist, as may be judged from his collections *Open House* (1927), *Apes and Angels* (1928), *Self-selected Essays* (1932).

Minor Essayists. Of the minor essayist those deserving of mention are Henry Austin Dobson (1840-1921), Alice Mevnell (1847-1922), Augustine Birrel (1850-1932), Maurice Baring (1874-1935), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) and Neville Cardus (1889-), the Cricket expert.

Criticism

The 20th century has been very prolific in the production of criticism, but most of it is shallow, second-hand or erratic. The death of good criticism is explained by the phenomenal increase in book production, mass education and consequent lowering of standards of literary taste and by the influence of professional journalism and book-reviewing. Journalism which has in the past produced great

essayists has not been helpful to literary criticism. Modern journalism has encouraged the 'popular'—that which has mass appeal. This simply means the inane, the trivial, the sensational. Whatever sane or solid criticism we have was written for the most part, in the early years of the century. Later criticism, especially in the 30s and after is, with rare exceptions, flabby, unoriginal or simply erratic. Selected critical works of merit are discussed below.

Literary History

George Saintsbury (1845-1933), Professor of English literature at Edinburgh university, was a leading authority on literary subjects including prosody. Of his numerous critical works the most important are: *Short History of English Literature* (1898), *A History of Criticism* (1904), *A History of English Prosody*, *The Peace of the Augustans* (1915). *The English Novel* (Four Wheels of the Novel Wain), *A Letter Book*. His wide reading and confident judgements make his books an invaluable aid to all students of English literature. His *Short History of English Literature* is a classic. His terse and comprehensive style is exasperating only to indolent readers (See also Special Studies).

Oliver Elton (1861-1945): *A Survey of English Literature* (covering 1730-1880) is an easy and reliable guide.

Sir Herbert Grierson (1866-1960) is well known for his *Background of English Literature* (1925), *Cross-currents in the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (1929) (See also Special Studies).

C.H. Herford's *The Age of Wordsworth* (1897) with its very learned introduction is well established as a guide to the romantic period.

Frank Swinnerton's *The Georgian Literary Scene* (1935) is an excellent survey of the literature of the present century (See also Special Studies).

A.C. Ward's *Twentieth Century Literature* (1901-60) is a concise and well-grouped survey of the modern period.

W.J. Entwistle and Eric Gillett's *The Literature of England A.D. 500-1946* is one of the best general histories of English literature published to date.

Poetry

Theodore Watts-Dunton (1832-1914) who became famous for his article on Poetry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is now remembered by a single volume *Poetry and the Renaissance of Wonder* which appeared posthumously in 1916.

Arthur Symonds (1865-1945) one of the Aesthetes wrote on all forms of art, but is remembered today by *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) and *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry* (1909).

A.C. Bradley (1851-1934), Professor of Poetry at Oxford (1901-6)

and one of the most thoughtful critics of the century, will be long remembered for his commentary on *In Memoriam* (1901) and *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (1909). His *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) is a classic (See Shakespeare and Drama).

W.P. Ker (1855-1923), though a formidable scholar, has never been popular. A conservative critic, his chief contributions are *Epic and Romance* (1896), *Essays on Medieval Literature* (1905) and *The Art of Poetry* (1923). Sir Herbert Grierson (1866-): *Metaphysical Poets* (1921), *Lyrical Poetry from Blake to Hardy* (1928), and *A Critical History of English Poetry* (in collaboration with J.C. Smith 1944).

W.J. Courthope (1842-1917) produced a monumental *History of English Poetry* in six volumes (completed in 1909).

B. lfor Evans's *English Poetry between the Wars* (1947) is readable and popular.

Shakespeare and Drama

A.C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) is still the most widely read of critical books on Shakespeare. Besides Shakespeare's idea of tragedy, the book contains penetrating studies of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. One only wishes that *Antony and Cleopatra* had also been included in Shakespeare's tragic canon.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1861-1922): *Shakespeare* in the "English Men of Letter" series.

E.K. Chambers: *Shakespeare, A Survey*, the best general survey of Shakespeare's plays.

Quiller-Couch (1863-1944): *Shakespeare's Workmanship*, an easy stimulating and refreshing appreciation.

Dover Wilson (1888-): *The Essential Shakespeare, Life in Shakespeare's England, What Happens in Hamlet, The Fortunes of Falstaff*.

G.B. Harrison (1894-): *Introducing Shakespeare*, and (in collaboration with Granville Barker) *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*.

J.C. Squire : *Shakespeare as a Dramatist*, John Bailey: *Shakespeare* in the "English Heritage" series—a brief and valuable guide.

Special Studies

Walter Raleigh: *The English Novel*, studies of Stevenson, Milton, Wordsworth; *Six Essays on Johnson, Some Authors*.

Quiller-Couch: *On the Art of Writing, On the Art of Reading*.

Chesterton: *Charles Dickens and other Victorians, Browning*.

Percy Lubbock (1879-): *The Craft of Fiction*.

Forster: *Aspects of the Novel*.

Harold Nicholson: *The Development of English Biography* (1937).

Frank Swinnerton: *R.L. Stevenson, The Reviewing and Criticism of Books, George Gissing*.

The New Criticism

What has been called the New Criticism appeared in the 20s with the advent of T.S. Eliot. By that time romanticism had reached a dead end with the Georgians and anti-romanticism was in the air. The anti-romantic impulse was stimulated and reinforced by the example of Eliot's poetry and criticism. He founded and edited the literary quarterly the *Criterion* which lasted seventeen years (1922-39). Apart from his commentaries in this periodical, the best of his criticism will be found in *Selected Essays* (1932, revised 1951) and in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933). His social criticism is contained in *After Strange Gods* (1934), *Idea of a Christian Society* (1939), and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948). Though we are not directly concerned with Eliot's social criticism, it is important from the literary point of view, to remember that he regarded the study of classics as essential to the continuity of tradition—the tradition of English literature. Eliot's concern with tradition, his sense of the past as something that vitalises the present is the key-note of all his writing. It is also that which gives his criticism its permanent worth. Eliot's major reassessments include Elizabethan drama, Donne and his Metaphysical school of poetry, Milton, Dryden, Baudelaire and the French Symbolists, and Dante. He dismissed the great romantic poets as "riff-raff" of the early 19th century and rearranged English poets in a new order with Donne and the Metaphysicals at the head. His revaluation of Elizabethan dramatists adds nothing to what had been said before by Lamb, Hazlitt, Swinburne and others. His condemnation of Milton follows the line of Johnson. He declared himself a classicist in literature, but he was no more a classicist than Baudelaire from whom his technique directly derives. The only difference is that while Baudelaire was a counter-romantic in a romantic age, Eliot was a counter-romantic in a counter-romantic age. The influence of Dante is reflected in Eliot's moral preoccupations.

Eliot's anti-romantic passion conjoined to a passion for novelty led him into opinions which cannot but be described as heresies. One of them is his doctrine of impersonality. Poetry, according to him, is not an outpouring of emotion, but an escape from emotion. Another is that the range of poetry should be extended to include non-poetic themes and objects. The tragic fiasco of 'modernist' poetry is answer enough to both these tenets. The dictum that modern poetry must be "difficult" is nothing but an apologia for the perversities of his own poetry. As regards his charge of "dissociation of sensibility" against Milton and Dryden, it is psychological jugglery which would make most poets (and not only English poets) split personalities. A great poet's experience is a psychic unity—thought and emotion inextricably interfused.

Eliot's literary criticism, like his poetry, is academic, bookish and slight in substance. Its tone is vain, dogmatic, pontifical. Overlearned as he was, he found Arnold deficient in knowledge: "in philosophy and theology he was an undergraduate; in religion a Philistine". This statement and the jibe that Arnold was "an Inspector of schools and he became Professor of Poetry" are evidence of pique; they are not criticism. Eliot's influence was restricted to the highbrow minority; Arnold's had extended far beyond it—even to the "philistines" whom he exasperated.

To say all this, however, is not to deny Eliot's historical position as the most important critic of the first half of this century. As regards his intrinsic worth as a critic it lay less in advancing new and powerful ideas than in reaffirming certain canons of literary taste which were and still are threatened by anarchy. Among these affirmations are his repudiation of the theory of "art for art's sake" and his declaration that all modern literature is corrupted by secularism, by failure to recognise the primacy of spiritual values. If he has not been heeded, the fault is not his. He showed the light, demonstrated the value of tradition and the relationship of life and letters.

Criticism which was academic with Eliot became scientific in the 30s in the hands of two Cambridge teachers I.A. Richards (1893-) and F.R. Leavis (1895-). Richards' *Principles of Literary Criticism* appeared in 1924, his *Science and Poetry* in 1926 and *Practical Criticism* in 1929. Leavis brought out his *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* in 1930 followed by *New Bearings in English Poetry* (1932) and launched scientific criticism in right earnest by founding and editing the *Scrutiny* in 1932. He was assisted by a band of collaborators, and the magazine lasted till 1953—a total of 21 years. Besides, there were other minority monthlies and weeklies which toed *Scrutiny's* line and produced astounding judgments. The notion of criticism as appreciation and enjoyment of literature receded further into the background. Indeed enjoyment became suspect in the eyes of the new critics.

Basically the new criticism was a throw-back to Matthew Arnold. Its over-riding aim was to correct public taste and save literature from debasement for the cultured minority. With this end in view they rewrote the history of English literature, judging authors and works by puritanical standards. The aesthetes of Bloomsbury and the academics were repudiated. Formal perfection of art, it was argued, did not consist in beauty of composition or truth to life, but in moral sensibility. Few authors passed the test. Leavis in his *The Great Tradition* (1948) excludes from the history of fiction all except George Eliot, Henry James and Conrad, while he is so obsessed by Lawrence that he devotes to him a whole book *D.H. Lawrence—Novelist* (1955).

"Practical Criticism" meant judgments based on a detailed analysis carried out by an elaborate technique recommended by Richards. Leavis insisted on close attention to "words on the page"

to show the relevance of a passage to the work as a whole as also the rank the work should have in literary hierarchy. No criticism was considered complete until all aspects of a work had been examined and all approaches explored. In treating Shakespeare, for example, some critics busied themselves with his imagery, some with symbolism—in fact with anything that happened to be the pet fancy of the critic. L.C. Knights, an important collaborator of Leavis, ridiculed Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, which however has survived the assault. It has been argued that the human appeal of Shakespeare's characters is irrelevant. On what else, one may ask, is enjoyment of Shakespeare's plays based?

The aggressive attitude of the *Scrutiny* roused hostility among people who did not like literature, a live thing, to be treated as a corpse for anatomical dissection. They also protested against the finicky exclusiveness of Leavis and his disciples. Literature is not the monopoly of the cultured few. Culture should be broadbased and cultural opportunities accessible to all in the republic of letters. Fortunately, the influence of the school of Richards and Leavis has been negligible.

Attempts to rescue criticism from cliques and coteries have been recently made by such ethical writers as C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) *An Experiment in Criticism* and Graham Hough (*The Dream and the Task: Literature and Morals in the Culture of Today*). These promise a better future for criticism. More will certainly come.

Mention may also be made of a passing phase in criticism in the late 30s. This was the splitting of critics in two camps: Communists and non-Communists, brought about by political tensions in Europe (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Spanish Civil War).

Biography

19th century biographies were generally laudatory, the writer's attitude to his subject being pious and reverent. Lord Rosebury's famous *Life* (1891) and Churchill's *Lord Randolph Churchill* (1906) belong to this tradition. The attitude of irreverence to the past after the disillusionment of the war of 1914-18 appeared for the first time in Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918). The portraits of the great Victorians in this book are stripped of their romantic glamour and their less flattering characteristics brought in the foreground. Florence Nightingale, for example, is seen not only as the 'Lady of the Lamp', an angel of mercy, but also as a ruthless slave-driver who prodded cabinet ministers and bureaucrats to desperation. Similar treatment is given to General Gordon, Cardinal Manning, Dr. Arnold. In *Queen Victoria* (1921), Strachey (1880-1932) is more sober and balanced. He shows us not only a queen but also an ideal wife.

Strachey's great weapon was irony, and *Eminent Victorians* set the tone for subsequent biographers. It made 'debunking' fashionable. Writers probed and pried into the dark, hidden corners of the lives of the great and even used pseudo-Freudian psychology

to drag out their unsavoury traits. This kind of denigration of celebrities is exciting to scandal lovers, but it serves no other purpose than the dubious one of tarnishing a person's public image. Few of Strachey's disciples or imitators possessed his gift of trenchant irony or his picturesque style. They inherited from him nothing but his shallow scepticism. Strachey was in high favour with the young because they relished the breaking of Victorian idols.

A host of biographies have been published in this century, but only a few have attained literary distinction. These include Phillip Guedalla's *Palmerston* (1926); Lord David Cecil's *The Stricken Deer* (1929), a life of Cowper; E.V. Lucas's *Life of Charles Lamb* (1928); St. John Irvine's *Parnell* (1925); Duff-Cooper's *Talleyrand* (1932). Edmund Goss's *Father and Son* (1907) describing his clash with his father over religion was condemned at first, but now that the dogma that children should not criticise their parents has been exploded, the merit of the book is generally recognised.

Autobiography

The special interest of autobiography depends on the eminence of the writer or on his uncommon experiences. The success of an autobiography, however, is determined largely by the degree of informality or intimacy to which the reader is admitted. Few have the moral courage (or impudence?) to reveal all about themselves. A Samuel Pepys or a Boswell is rare. Subject to this reservation, the following may be regarded as the highlights in this category of writing.

Gissing's *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), a quiet and soothing book reflecting his new-found happiness after a hard life of poverty and drudgery in London.

W.H. Davies's *The Autobiography of Super-tramp* (1908), a humorous and realistic account of the poet's life as a tramp in America and of his early life of poverty as a writer in England.

George Moore's *Hail and Farewell* (a trilogy comprising *Ave*, *Salve* and *Vale*, 1911-14) is rather indiscreet but contains fascinating sketches of the leading Irish writers.

Lady Asquith's *Autobiography* (1920) is witty and throws interesting side-lights on the history of the period.

Siegfried Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man* (1928) and *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) have already been noticed.

T.E. Lawrence, 'Lawrence of Arabia' (1888-1935): *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935) is considered one of the great books of the century, principally because of the legendary character of its author. Lawrence had become famous as the man who organised the successful Arab revolt against Turkish rule in the first World War. The book is not very satisfying as autobiography, and though much additional matter has since been published including Lawrence's other books

(*Men in Print*, 1940 etc.) as well as his *Letters* (edited by David Garnett, 1938), the man remains an enigma. Disappointed with the Peace Treaty he sought refuge in obscurity. He changed his name first to Ross, then to Shaw. He served in the Air Force, then in the Tank Corps and back again in the Air Force. He died as the result of an accident.

Osbert Sitwell's autobiography *Left Hand, Right Hand* in five volumes (1945-50) is the most considerable achievement in this line so far. Written by one of the greatest prose writers of his time, the work is in the grand style, satisfying both as a self-portrait and as a portrait of the period.

Sir Winston Churchill's *Second World War* is not only a monumental history of the war, but is of great autobiographical interest because of the central and crucial role its author played in the events leading to the victory. Of greater autobiographical interest is his *My Early Life* (1930).

Among other writings of autobiographical interest those deserving of mention are: Chesterton's *Autobiography*, H.G. Wells's *An Experiment in Autobiography* (1934), John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir's *Memory Hold the Door* (1940), Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), *Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence* (1931), *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* (1932).

Travel Books

Travel Books of the kind represented by Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey* are a rarity in any age, for the interest of such books depends less on the remoteness or strangeness of the land visited than on the character of the traveller. In the present century we can point only to two books which have attained classic status: W.H. Hudson's *Far Away and Long Ago* (1918) and Hilaire Belloc's *The Path to Rome* (1902). Hudson (1841-1922) born in Argentine came to England in 1869 and was naturalised in 1900. In *Far Away and Long Ago* he writes of his early life and of the loveliness of the English countryside, specially of its birds on which he was a noted authority. All his writings are characterised by calmness and serenity. *A Shepherd's Life* (1910) ranks with White's *Selborne* and Walton's *Compleat Angler*. His *Green Mansions* (1904) is a South American romance.

Belloc's classic has the opposite quality of loud robustiousness. Vigorous walking, hard thinking, and drinking beer—these are the things he enjoys.

Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936), a noted Scottish traveller in Arab lands, produced many books which are hard to classify, being mixtures of history, travel, essay and fiction. His earliest work was *Mogreb-el-Acksa* (1898), an account of his journey to Morocco. His other works are *The Ipani* (1899), *A Vanished Arcadia* (1901), *Success* (1902), *Progress* (1905), *Faith* (1909), *Hope* (1910) and *Charity* (1911).

Graham was a social rebel and all his work bears the imprint of his turbulent individuality.

Axel Munthe's *The Story of San Michele* (1929) describes the island paradise of San Michele off the coast of Naples. It enjoyed wide popularity for some time but was soon forgotten.

Gertrude Bell travelled widely in the Middle East and her travels can be read in her *Letters* (1927) and *Earlier Letters* (1937).

Major I. Corbett's *The Man-eaters of Kumaon* (1946) and *The Man-eating Leopard of Rudraprayag* (1948) have maintained their interest and popularity.

W. Somerset Maugham was a widely travelled man and his *Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930) is a notable contribution to travel literature.

History

Histories that satisfy the double demand of accuracy and literary grace are not common. Only a few historians of the present century can claim to be historical men of letters. The biggest history produced in the 20th century is *A Study of History* in 12 volumes (completed in 1961) by A.J. Toynbee (1869-). An abridged edition in two volumes is now available. Being a philosophy of history, it has evoked considerable controversy among scholars.

The Second World War in 6 volumes (completed in 1954) by Winston Churchill (1874-1965) has been previously noticed. Another remarkable work is his *A History of the English Speaking Peoples* in four volumes (completed in 1955). Famous as a phrase maker, Churchill was the only Prime Minister after Disraeli to be a distinguished man of letters. He was awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1953. *History of England* (1926) and *English Social History* (1944) by G.M. Trevelyan (1876-1962), grand nephew of Macaulay, are objective as well as scholarly. The huge *History of Europe* (1935) by H.A.L. Fisher (1865-1940) occupies a place in the front rank of historical works distinguished by literary excellence.

Philosophy

Philosophy in the 20th century has made no meaningful contribution to thought. Philosophers have got bogged down in what is known as the 'linguistic movement' and repudiated both metaphysics and ethics. Language, they argue, is full of ambiguity and can not reflect rational thought. Metaphysics inquire into the nature of reality, to reveal reality we need a scientific language; language, that is to say, which has been purged of its emotive elements. It is not realized that language from which all emotion has been eliminated would cease to be a medium of communication. Such a language can have no style, and it is not surprising that the writings of Moore, Russell, and Wittgenstein—the three great modern philosophers—have no literary distinction. Their cold statements are couched in

studiously plain, even colloquial language. As writers pure and simple, they are vastly inferior to Berkeley, Hume, Mill and Bradley (F.H.)

The influence of this linguistic heresy in philosophy has spread to other branches of knowledge. Its impact on literary criticism may be seen in Richard's *Principles of Criticism* and Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

Ethics has not fared any better at the hands of our philosophers. It has been swept off the board on the ground that moral judgments have no objective validity. They are neither true nor false; they are mere expressions of individual feeling. In his *Conquest of Happiness*, a manual of mental hygiene, Bertrand Russell breezily dismisses the notion of sin by saying that either all of us are sinners or nobody is a sinner. Wittgenstein rejects speculative philosophy and ethics as vain pursuits. According to Moore, the notion of 'good' is like the notion of 'yellow'; they can be understood only by one who knows them. They are primary or simple notions and cannot be reduced to simpler terms. In short, the philosophers have abandoned their function of telling us what we ought to do. In this negative role they have only added to the moral confusion and uncertainty that has characterised British culture of the past fifty years.

Bertrand Russell, third Earl Russell (1872-1970), was born in Wales, educated at Cambridge, Fellow of Trinity College, awarded O.M. (1944) and Nobel Prize for Literature (1950). Works: *The Principles of Mathematics*, *Principia Mathematica* (in collaboration with A.N. Whitehead), *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920), *The Analysis of Matter* (1927), *Education and the Social Order* (1932), *Freedom and Organisation* (1934), *An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth* (1940), *A History of Western Philosophy* (1945), *Authority and the Individual* (1949), *New Hopes for a Changing World* (1951).

G.E. Moore (1873-1958) was lecturer in Moral Sciences (1911-25) and Professor of Philosophy from 1925 onwards at Cambridge. Works: *Principia Ethica* (1903) which initiated the philosophy of commonsense; *Ethics* (1912), *Philosophical Studies* (1922).

Ludwig Joseph Johann Wittgenstein (1889-1951) of Jewish parents was born in Vienna, studied Mathematics under Russell, inherited great wealth which was given away to Rilke and other poets, was taken prisoner by Italians in the first World War, was naturalised in Britain (1938) and was Professor of Moral Sciences at Cambridge (1939-47). Works: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, written in prison; *Philosophical Investigations*; *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958), compiled by his students.

GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

Many of the terms included here are explained at length in their proper contexts in the body of the text.

Aesthetic Movement: The movement, in imitation of the 19th century French cult of Beauty, associated with Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, whose slogan was 'Art for art's sake'. It held that art was independent of morality.

Alexandrine: A line of six iambic feet used by Spenser to close his stanza (Spenserian stanza).

Allegory: A story in verse or prose treating of high moral or spiritual subjects in ordinary terms. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the best example in English.

Alliteration: The use of the same initial letter in successive words; e.g. An Austrian army awfully arrayed/Boldly by battery besieged Belgrade, etc.

Anapaest: A foot of two shorter (or unaccented) syllables followed by a long (or accented) one (˘˘—).

Anglo-Saxon: The same as Old English, from the earliest times to the 12th century.

Anti-climax: Sinking after climax or the highest point of interest in a work of art. Such weak ending is a defect; e.g. Hamlet lugging the dead Polonius off the stage. This defect was due to the absence of 'curtain' on the Elizabethan stage.

Anti-hero: The anti-hero embodying qualities reverse of the heroic may be said to have arrived in Bloom of Joyce's *Ulysses*. His successors in the line are Charles Lumley in John Wain's novel *Hurry on Down* (1953), Jim Dixon in Kingsley Amis's novel *Lucky Jim* (1954), Jimmy Porter in Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Joe Lampton in John Braine's novel *Room at the Top* (1962).

Anti-masque: See Masque.

Apocalypse: The last book of the New Testament or the Book of Revelation containing the revelation made to St. John.

Apocrypha: Books of the Bible regarded as of doubtful authenticity. Apocryphal figuratively means spurious.

Avant-garde: The term is applied to ultramodernists and innovators in literature.

Ballad: A real old-time ballad is a short narrative poem of anonymous authorship transmitted by word of mouth. Simple and direct in language, such ballads are romantic tales of love, adventure, heroism, the supernatural, etc. The earliest examples are 'Robin Hood' ballads, 'Chevy Chase' and 'Patric Spens'. The common ballad metre is a four line stanza with alternating iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter; the trimeter lines always rhyming together. Examples of literary ballads are Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Scott's *Lochinvar*, W.S. Gilbert's *Bab Ballads* and others. See under 15th century ballads and Percy's *Reliques* (1765).

Baroque: A term applied to the grotesquely ornamental style of architecture in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially in France and Italy. In literature the term means ebullient, over-ornate style. It is almost the same as rococo.

Bathos: Descent from the sublime to the ridiculous. Unintentional bathos betrays the writer's ineptitude. Deliberate bathos for comic effect is a different thing and has been used by Pope and T.S. Eliot. The following example from *Rape of the Lock* is well known—

Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast,
When husbands, or when lap dogs breathe their last.

Eliot uses bathos much too frequently to be very interesting.

Belles-lettres (Fr.) meaning 'fine literature' is now restricted in English to essays and lighter forms of literature.

Blank Verse: Unrhymed decasyllabic verse. It is the normal verse of tragic drama. Outside drama the greatest example of it is *Paradise Lost*.

Bowdlerize: From Dr Thomas Bowdler who in his edition of *Shakespeare* (1818) cut out from it all indelicate and profane words. To bowdlerize, therefore, means to expurgate.

Burden or Refrain is the same line repeated at the end of stanzas of a poem.

Burlesque, From Italian *burla*, a jest, is a piece of comic writing imitating a person or style designed to produce ludicrous effect. The ludicrous effect is produced by contrast between the subject and the manner of its treatment. A lofty subject may be treated in a low, trivial manner or a low, trivial subject may be treated in a solemn, grand manner. Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* burlesques the Puritans, Chaucer's *Sir Topas* burlesques (or parodies) the romances, Buckingham's *Rehearsal* and Fielding's *Tom Thumb* burlesque (or parody) the heroic drama of the period, Pope's *Rape of the Lock* burlesques the foibles of the aristocracy. Other famous burlesques are W.S. Gilbert's operas: *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado* and *Patience*. Varieties of burlesque are sometimes distinguished as parody and mock epic or mock heroic, but the line between them is a bit blurred. Imitation of authors or styles is generally called a parody, e.g. *Sir Topas*

and *Rehearsal*; while *Rape of the Lock* is known as a mock epic.

Byronic, Byronism: Terms denoting the characteristics of Byron and his romantic heroes—fierce love of liberty, bold defiance of a tyrannical world, cynicism, self-pity, etc. (See under Byron).

Caesura (Latin) for pause, is a slight break or pause in the line with or without punctuation. In Pope, the pause is usually in the middle. Example: 'For forms of government let fools contest.' In Shakespeare and Milton the pause may occur anywhere in the line; there may even be more than one pause. The pause, however, is not compulsory, nor does it affect the metre.

Carol is now a religious song like Christmas Carols.

Caroline, from Carolus, Latin for Charles, denotes the period of Charles I (1625-49). Caroline poets are: Herrick, Crashaw, Vaughan, Carew, Lovelace and Suckling.

Classic, Classical: The words originally referred to the classes of Roman society, then to the highest class of citizen or to a thing of the highest excellence. At the Renaissance the literatures of Greece and Rome were called classics or classical i.e. of the highest excellence. The chief classical qualities are perfection of form—order, balance, proportion in the ingredients—and precision and restraint in expression. The term Neo-classic is used to describe the literature of Post-Restoration period and the 18th century (Dryden, Pope, Addison, Johnson, etc). The Neo-classic writers obeyed the so-called 'rules' of the classical writers and looked down upon the romantic literature of the Elizabethan age. Classical literature is ruled by reason and reality; romantic by fancy and imagination. Romantic writers reject authority and rules, claiming individual freedom in both substance and expression. This freedom is the hallmark of the Romantic Revival of the early 19th century.

Cliche: An expression that has become stale by repeated use; e.g. 'leave no stone unturned', 'explore every avenue', etc.

Comedy: A play designed to cause laughter, representing characters and incidents of everyday life. The important point to note is that comedy appeals to the intellect and as such is opposed to tragedy whose appeal is emotional. There are several kinds of comedy in English. Shakespeare's Romantic Comedy is a class by itself. Apart from its aristocratic character and its fairy-tale elements, it is poetic and does not altogether bar emotional appeal. The Comedy of Humours practised by Ben Jonson ridicules special oddities or eccentricities of character. The Comedy of Manners which came to England from France after the Restoration is so-called from its reflecting the society of the time—its sophistication, cynicism, profligacy, etc. The term 'high' comedy and 'artificial' comedy are also applied to the Restoration comedy of Manners (Congreve, Etherege, etc). Comedy of Manners at its lowest level becomes Farce.

A farce is characterised by horse play, practical jokes and vulgar speech. Almost every comedy includes a bit of farce (e.g. Malvolio

scenes in *Twelfth Night*). The Restoration comedy was followed by the Sentimental Comedy of Steele and others and had a great vogue in the 18th century, until this 'tearful Muse' was laughed out by Goldsmith and Sheridan. They revived the Comedy of Manners in a purer form and this has persisted to this day.

Cubism: An art term, has no connection with literature. In painting cubism is representation of objects in the form of cubes and other geometrical figures. It originated with the French painter Paul Cezanne (1839-1906).

Dactyl: A metrical foot consisting of one accented and two unaccented syllables (—²).

Dadaism: From French *dada*, hobby horse. A disruptive movement in art and literature, started in Zurich during the first World War, sought destruction of all tradition in art and all values of life. It was an expression of revolt against the horrors of the war. It spread to England and America but died out in the 1920s, perhaps merging with Surrealism (which see). Such negative movements are called 'Anti-Art'. At some exhibitions of Anti-Art the visitor was invited to take a hatchet and smash any of the pictures he chose.

Dissociation of Sensibility: See under T.S. Eliot.

Distich: The same as couplet—two lines making complete sense.

Diction: Words used in any composition. The Neo-classical writers held that only some special words were fit for use in poetry. Dr. Johnson said that words "too familiar or too remote defeat the purpose of the poet." So shepherds, for example, were always 'swains'. They permitted familiar words in lower forms of poetry like satire, but not in higher forms of epic and tragedy. Thus arose the theory of 'Poetic Diction' which was attacked by Wordsworth (see under Wordsworth).

Didactic: Designed to teach moral lesson. The question whether literature should instruct or only entertain has been endlessly debated. It is enough to point out that all great literature is didactic. Theories like 'art for art's sake' and of 'pure' poetry, etc. stand discredited. Literature instructs through delight.

Dithyramb: A choral song in honour of Dionysus, Greek god of vegetation and wine. Greek tragedy is supposed to have developed from dithyrambic hymns. The term is now applied to any poem of wild, passionate character. A good example is Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*.

Doggerel: Literally unmetrical verse. The term is now loosely applied to any trivial, irregular verse, especially burlesque. Skelton's verse and Butler's *Hudibras* are good examples.

Eclogue: Short pastoral poem keeping up the tradition of Theocritus and Virgil making shepherds talk poetry.

Elegy: Properly a poem of mourning, e.g. *Lycidas*, *In Memoriam*,

Thyrsis; also a poem which, though it does not lament a death, is pervaded by a general tone of sadness, e.g. Gray's *Elegy*.

Elision: Omission in verse of a vowel when two come together, as also of an unstressed syllable in order to make the line conform to the prevailing metre.

Empericism, Emperical: These terms mean a doctrine or system that depends on experience—observation and experiment not on theory.

Enlightenment: The term refers to the philosophical movement of the 18th century Germany, France, and England which trusted only reason and aimed at freeing religion and morals from prejudice and superstition.

Envoy (from French): The last section of a poem commending it to the reader or to the person to whom it is dedicated, e.g. Chaucer's 'Envoy' to *The Canterbury Tales*.

Epic: A long narrative poem celebrating the achievements of a national hero or heroes in a dignified style; e.g. *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Aeneid*, *Orlando Furioso* etc.

Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the only English poem of epic character, but not a real epic, since its hero is undetermined.

Equivalence: A term of prosody meaning acceptance of two unaccented syllables as equivalent to one accented, and of a three-syllable foot as equivalent to a two-syllable foot. This is also known as 'substitution',

Existentialism: A philosophy much in vogue since World War II. There is Christian existentialism associated with the Danish "religious writers" (his own description of himself) Kierkegaard (1813-55) who held that man loses his tensions in God. As opposed to this is the atheistic existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre (b. 1905) and Heidegger (b. 1889). It is this latter existentialism that is popular. It is not easy to understand or explain briefly. In its simplest form it may be stated as follows.

The term is a compound of 'exist' and 'essence'. Existence comes before essence. That is to say, man exists before he acquires essence, a definite individuality. The difference is between 'being' and 'becoming'. Other things also exist, but man differs from them in that he is free to become a personality. Water or wine is simply 'being'; it cannot 'become'. Man, on the other hand, can 'become', for example, by choosing to deny God and traditional social values. Strong men transcend the tyrannical discipline of a stupid society and make their own values, commit themselves to a cause in their effort to change society. They overcome life's complexities; weak men make vain efforts to escape from them. In short, man must change mere existence into essence by asserting his freedom and making his own character.

Both schools of Existentialism distrust reason. They hold that

none of the important problems of life—God, evil, sin, etc.—can be solved by reason. Its emphasis on subjectivity, on individual freedom, has made existentialism a popular point of view in literature. Sartre, the most popular existentialist, is a communist. For many years he has been living with a woman without marriage.

Expressionism: A German movement in painting started after the first World War. The painter paints objects not as he sees them but as he feels them. Thus he consciously distorts reality in externalizing his feelings about it. Expressionism in literature includes any conscious disregard of reality. In drama the best examples are Eugene O'Neill's *Hairy Ape* and *Emperor Jones*. In fiction, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf and Marcel Proust can be called expressionists. Expressionism is a revolt against Naturalism (which see). Naturalism represents the concrete, Expressionism the abstract. The results of the Expressionistic technique are often bewildering.

Essay, from 'assay' or trial has come to mean 'attempt'. Its present meaning of a short composition in prose on a subject treated subjectively and in a light manner was made popular by the *Essais* of Montaigne in the 16th century. The Essay proper, or personal essay, exemplified in Lamb, Addison, Goldsmith, Stevenson etc. is distinguished from the informative or expository essays of Bacon, Macaulay, etc.

Fabliau: A short humorous, often coarse, tale in verse common in the Middle Ages satirising middle-class life.

Farce: See Comedy.

Feminine rhyme, also called double rhyme, is rhyme of two syllables, the second unstressed. It is generally confined to comic verse. Examples from Matthew Prior: treasure/measure, vexation/passion. In Masculine or single rhyme the last syllable is stressed e.g. tear/fear, they/day.

Foot: Unit of metre consisting of syllables accented and unaccented. The commonest metrical foot in English is the iambic. Also popular are trochee and anapaest. Less common are spondee and dactyl (all which see).

Free Verse is verse without regular metre, "but depending for its effect upon natural speech rhythms". T.S. Eliot is a great exponent of free verse and much of 'modernist' poetry is in free verse.

Facsimile: Exact copy of writing, printing, picture, etc.

Frontispiece: Illustration facing the title page of a book.

Georgian: Term commonly applied to poetry produced during the reign of George V popularised by Edward Marsh in his anthologies of "Georgian Poetry".

Grundy Mrs: A character in Thomas Morton's play *Speed the Plough* (1798). She never appears in the play but everybody is afraid of "what will Mrs Grundy say?" She is the symbol of social

decorum and propriety. We refer to stern, intolerant critics as Mrs Grundys of criticism.

Heroic: The word is used in at least three different senses: (a) 'heroic' or epic poetry: Milton called *Paradise Lost* a heroic poem; (b) 'heroic' drama of Dryden and his contemporaries, largely in imitation of French prose romances of the 17th century; (c) 'heroic' verse, the particular verse used in heroic or epic poetry. This is the origin of the 'heroic couplet'—of two decasyllabic lines.

Homily: Though now used of a tedious moralizing sermon, in old and Middle English it signified a short religious discourse.

Horatian Ode: An ode by Horace has the same metrical arrangement in each stanza. The Odes of Horace are distinguished for grace and economy. Cf. Marvell's *Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland*.

Hornbook: In olden days, it was a sheet of paper containing the alphabet, numerals and the Lord's prayer mounted on a wooden tablet with a handle and protected by a thin plate of horn. Cf. Dekker's *The Gull's Hornebooke*.

Humour: 'Humours'. See under Ben Jonson.

Iambus, Iambic: A metric foot of two syllables, the first unaccented, the second accented (˘—). The commonest in English poetry.

Idyll: Short verse or prose piece depicting pastoral or romantic scene. We speak of idyllic surroundings meaning picturesque or, romantic. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* are idylls in the different sense of Theocritus's 'epillion', a little epic. They are picturesque episodes from the heroic age of Arthur.

Imagery, Imagist, Imagism: The Imagist movement in poetry was started by Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme and others in the second decade of the 20th century. It was a protest against the vague and abstract images of Romantic poetry. The Imagists took the whole world as fit subject matter for poetry, but insisted that poetry consisted in sharply defined concrete images. At first the Imagists confined their poetry only to visual images. But it didn't work. So images other than visual also included. Since then the word imagery has become very common in criticism and includes images involving all senses: nose, ear, touch etc. Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* illustrates imagery in its comprehensive sense. In the first six stanzas we have images of objects seen in "beechen green" "the grass, the thicket" etc., images of taste in 'hemlock' and "the blushful Hippocrine", images of smell in the "soft incense" of flowers, images of touch in the flowers at the poet's feet, and images of sound in the "full-throated" song of the nightingale. Contrasted with these there is no clear image in "magic casements, opening on the foam/Of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn." The vision called up by these lines is the quintessence of romance.

Impressionism: Broadly speaking Impressionism implies subjective

approach to literary writing. Analogous to the French Impressionist painters (like Edouard Manet, 1832-83) the writers record their immediate impressions of the objects they are describing. Much of the descriptive writing of the aesthetic school of 1890s is impressionistic.

Interlude: See under Early English Drama.

Irony: A remark which means the opposite of what it says. Dramatic irony is a remark whose significance is perceived by the audience but not by the actors on the stage.

Jacobean: Of the reign of James I of England (1603-25), e.g. Jacobean drama, poetry, etc. from Latin *Jacobus*=James.

Jeu d'esprit (Fr.): A witticism or epigram.

Jongleur (Fr.): Medieval wandering minstrel.

Letterpress: The text in a book of illustrations—the printed matter about the illustrations.

Lyric: In its original Greek meaning a song sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. In its present use it is any short poem which expresses the poet's thoughts and feelings. The ode, the elegy, and the sonnet, are special forms of the lyric. The lyric was very popular in the 16th century; it was neglected in the 18th century and was revived in the 19th century by the Romantic poets.

Magnum Opus (Lat.): Great work, an author's greatest book.

Masque or *Mask*: Amateur dramatic entertainment comprising songs, music, dancing, elaborate costumes and scenic splendour. Plot and character are of the slightest. Ben Jonson wrote many courtly masques. The best known masque is Milton's *Comus*. There is a masque in *The Tempest*. See under Ben Jonson.

Meiosis (Gk.): Understatement, popular in English colloquial speech, e.g. "That speech of yours was not bad" means it was a good speech; "He was very decent about the compensation"—he gave a handsome or generous amount as compensation.

Melodrama: Originally a play with music and song interspersed (Gk. *melos*, a song). Now a sensational play with happy ending. The modern musical comedy is descended from the former.

Mime: On the modern stage a dumb show in which action is shown by gestures.

Mimesis (Gk): Imitation, used by Aristotle in the sense of representation.

Mock heroic: Species of burlesque, e.g. Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. See Burlesque.

Monody: Poem mourning some one's death, spoken by a single person, e.g. Milton's *Lycidas*, Arnold's *Thyrsis*.

Mot Juste, Mot Propre (Fr.): The precise expression to convey the meaning intended. The 'precious' word or phrase pursued by

Flaubert, Pater and others of the aesthetic school.

Musical Comedy: Species of light entertainment mixing opera and burlesque. Beginning in 1890s, it was widely popular until the 20s of the present century.

Naturalism: Term used by the French novelist Zola (1840-1902) to distinguish his method of realism from the realism of Balzac (1799-1850) and Flaubert (1821-80). Naturalism is extreme form of realism without selection of material and based on purely evolutionist conception of man as an animal without soul and free will whose behaviour is determined by heredity and environment. It reflects life in the raw, life in its sordid and gloomy aspects. The Naturalists called their kind of novel 'Slice of Life'. Quite obviously the 'Slice of life' novelist has little concern with form. The English followers of Zola and Maupassant did not carry their realism to such extremes, principally because their attitude to man was not deterministic. They regarded man as a person with individual peculiarities and idiosyncrasies.

Neo-classical: Applied to literature of the Augustan age—of the writings of Dryden, Pope, Johnson etc. who believed they were reviving the classical qualities of order, balance, sanity, etc.

Neo-Platonists: Those philosophers of the 3rd century A.D. who attempted to blend the philosophy of Plato with Christian and Eastern mysticism.

New Criticism: Associated with Cambridge scholars, especially I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis. See under these names.

Novella: About the same as short story, from the Italian word for a story.

Obiter dicta: A legal phrase meaning a Judge's remark made in passing, but not binding. The title of Augustine Birrell's essays is *Obiter Dicta*.

Ode: In Greek a poem that is sung; choral ode, song sung by chorus in a Greek play; Pindaric ode, poem in three parts: Strophe, Antistrophe and Epode. Strophe was sung when the chorus moved to one side, Antistrophe when it moved to the other and Epode when it stood still. In English the term is loosely applied to a lyric poem of some length in dignified language and elaborate metre. The ode was a favourite with the Romantic poets.

Opera (It.): Theatrical entertainment with music predominating. Grand opera is light opera with spoken dialogue, e.g. Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado*, etc.

Ottava rima: Stanza of eight iambic lines rhyming a b a b a b c c. Used in Byron's *Don Juan*.

Palinode (Gk.), "Singing over again", has come to mean a recantation—a poem in which a poet retracts something said in a preceding poem. Chaucer wrote *A Legend of Good Women* to atone for his

attacks on women in *Romaunt of the Rose* and *Troylus and Cryseyde*.

Pantomime: Dumbshow; more commonly an elaborate Christmas entertainment for children as well as adults, based on fairy tales with lively music, singing, dancing and broad clowning.

Parody: Form of burlesque which imitates another author's work in order to ridicule it. See *Burlesque*.

Pastiche: Literary or other work of art composed of matter, style, etc. borrowed from others.

Pastoral: Borrowed from the Greek, the pastoral—poem, play, or romance—presents shepherds or simple rustic life in an idealised manner. The connection of shepherds with poetry may or may not be quite clear, but the idea is very old, and tradition dies hard. Pastoral literature has been popular in England since the Renaissance and has given us such things as *Shepherd's Calendar*, *As You Like It*, *Lycidas* and *Thyrsis*.

Penny Dreadful: Cheap novel of sensational character.

Period: Ordinarily a full stop (.); in literature period (or periodic sentence) means a sentence with a number of clauses so arranged that the sense is not completed till the close. Popular with rhetoricians.

Periphrasis: Circumlocution, round about manner of expressing oneself.

Picaresque: From Spanish *pícaro*, a rogue; picaresque novel is one with a rogue as hero, or loosely one dealing with roguish or low life adventures. Le Sage's *Gil Blas* is the most famous French example. English examples are Defoe's *Captain Singleton*, *Colonel Jack*, Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*.

Potboiler: Work written to make a living, to keep the pot boiling.

Precious: Used of affectation in expression, style, etc. displaying excessive refinement. e.g. Pater's style.

Problem play, *thesis play*, *propaganda play*: Terms commonly applied to the plays of Ibsen, Shaw, Galsworthy, etc.

Protagonist: Chief or leading character in a play: hero.

Realism: Writing which faithfully reproduces life, especially in its gloomy and less attractive aspects. The doctrine originated with the 19th century French novelists Balzac and Flaubert.

Revue: Theatrical entertainment with scenes purporting to 'review' satirically current events, fashions, etc.

Rhyme royal: Seven line decasyllabic stanza with the rhyme scheme a b a b b c c, (so called from its use by James I of Scotland in *The King's Quair*).

Rhythm: Basically, arrangement of words so as to have musical (or at least pleasing) effect. Regularity of rhythm makes verse. Prose

rhythm is less regular.

Romance: In the Middle Ages the word was used of a tale in verse (and later) or prose celebrating the adventures of a hero of chivalry. In the 16th and 17th centuries a romance meant a tale in verse or prose telling of scenes and incidents far removed from everyday life. Sidney's *Arcadia* is romance of this kind. In modern literature a romance is loosely a story of extraordinary or improbable incidents.

Romantic: Usually applied to writing which is subjective, individualistic, imaginative and unrestrained. It is the reverse of the classical. (See Classical)

Saga: In Norse means story; it is applied to medieval Scandinavian prose stories of kings and heroes. There is a saga, 'The Lovers of Gudrun' in Morris's *Earthly Paradise*. By extension it is any long story such as Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*.

Sarcasm: Irony of a bitter kind intended to give pain to its victim.

Satire: Composition which lashes vice or folly with ridicule. It employs irony and sarcasm. Famous English examples are Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, Pope's *Dunciad* Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*, his later namesake's *Erewhon*, Byron's *Don Juan*.

Scenario: Script of a film.

Slice of life: See Naturalism.

Sonnet: Lyric poem of fourteen lines differently arranged in the two English types: Shakespearean and Petrarchan. The Shakespearean sonnet has three quatrains and a couplet; the Petrarchan has an Octave (of eight lines) and a Sestet (of six lines) with intricate rhymes. (See text)

Spenserian stanza. Of nine lines—eight iambic pentameter, the ninth an Alexandrine or hexameter. The rhyme scheme is a b a b b c b c c. Used in Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, Byrons *Childe Harold*, Shelley's *Adonais*, Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*.

Spondee: Metric foot of two accented syllables (— —)

Sprung rhythm: Rhythm that depends on number of stresses and not on number of syllables. See under Hopkins.

Stichomythia: In Greek drama dialogue consisting of single lines spoken alternately by two characters especially in dispute. Example.

Queen: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet: Mother, You have my father much offended.

Queen: Come, come, You answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet: Go, Go, You question with a wicked tongue.

(*Hamlet*, Act III, 4)

Stream of consciousness: Technique in modern fiction which

depicts the flow of incoherent thoughts and feelings in the mind of a character. James Joyce's *Ulysses* is the supreme example of this technique.

Surrealism: Sur-realism, additional, extra, or beyond realism. Movement in art and literature originating in France in the 1920s which attempts to depict the workings of the sub-conscious. The result in literature is a jumble of words without coherence or logical sequence; in painting weird and fantastic distortions of ordinary objects. The best example of surrealist nonsense is the dream-world of a Dublin tavern-keeper described in James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.

Symbolism: Ordinarily a symbol is an object that represents something else; as the Crescent is the symbol of Islam, the Cross of Christianity. Symbolism in literature originated in France with Rimbaud, Mallarmé and others. They used symbols to express a higher and invisible world other than the world of concrete phenomena. Yeats, Eliot, James Joyce, Kafka, etc. are called symbolists. The movement was a revolt against realism and naturalism.

Terza rima: Used in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. A three line stanza (triplet), the first line rhyming with the third, the middle rhyming with the first and third of the next stanza and so on. Shelley uses this stanza in his *Ode to the West Wind*.

Tragedy: A serious play with unhappy ending and emotional appeal (the reverse of comedy). Tragedy in its literary sense shows the downfall including death of a great man through some fault in his character, e.g. Hamlet's indecision, Othello's jealousy. According to Aristotle the function of tragedy is to bring about purgation or purification (catharsis) of our emotions through pity and fear. Whether by 'catharsis' Aristotle meant purgation (purging away, eliminating) of our emotions of pity and fear, or their purification (chastening, ennoblement by being transferred from ourselves to more worthy persons like Hamlet, Lear and Othello) is a controversial issue. The latter meaning is more sensible.

Tragi-comedy: In its obvious literal sense a play which combines both tragic and comic elements. More commonly, however, it means a play which has tragic elements but which ends happily, e.g. *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Winter's Tale*.

Trochee. Metric foot of two syllables, the first accented, the second unaccented (—); reverse of the iambic.

Unities: The three dramatic unities of time, place and action. Aristotle in his *Poetics* has insisted on the unity of action, and has incidentally observed that the action should normally be confined to 24 hours. There is no mention of Unity of place. The Greek theatre had a chorus which never left the stage, and the stage had no 'curtain'. So it was obliged to observe the unity of place; for without a curtain there could be no shifting of scene from one place to another. The unity of place is, therefore, inferential and was added

by Italian critics of the 16th century.

Vaudeville (Fr.): Light theatrical entertainment of the nature of musical comedy; a variety show.

Well-made play: The term was used in a derogatory sense to describe the plays of the French dramatists Sardou and Scribe (late 19th century). Their technical perfection was rather mechanical and was ridiculed by Shaw as 'Sardoodledum'.

Yellow Book: The *Yellow Book* was an illustrated quarterly which appeared from 1894 to 1897. Among its contributors were Aubrey Beardsley (its art editor for a year). Max Beerbohm, Henry James, Edmund Gosse.

Yellow Press Journalism: "A name given to sensational journalism of America which developed about 1880 under the influence of Joseph Pulitzer. The term is derived from the appearance in 1895 of a number of the *New York World* in which a child in yellow dress ('The Yellow Kid') was the central figure of the cartoon, this being an experiment in colour-printing designed to attract purchasers" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). 'Yellow press' is a term which is now applied everywhere to sensational papers and periodicals.

Zeitgeist (Gr.): Spirit of the age.



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